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SWINBURNE'S TRAGEDIES

VOL. III

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THE TRAGEDIES  
OF  
ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE  
IN FIVE VOLUMES

VOLUME III

BOTHWELL

ACT III—JANE GORDON

ACT IV—JOHN KNOX

ACT V—THE QUEEN

LONDON  
CHATTO & WINDUS  
1905



## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

MARY STUART.

MARY BEATON.

MARY SEYTON.

MARY CARMICHAEL.

JANE GORDON, *Countess of Bothwell.*

JANET STUART, *Countess of Argyre.*

MARGARET LADY DOUGLAS *of Lochleven.*

LADY RERES.

HENRY LORD DARNLEY, *King Consort.*

JAMES HEPBURN, *Earl of Bothwell.*

JAMES STUART, *Earl of Murray.*

JAMES DOUGLAS, *Earl of Morton.*

WILLIAM MAITLAND *of Lethington, Secretary of State.*

JOHN KNOX.

DAVID RIZZIO.

*The Earls of* HUNTLEY, ARGYLE, CAITHNESS, ROTHES, CASSILIS,  
ATHOL, *and* MAR.

*Lords* HERRIES, LINDSAY, RUTHVEN, FLEMING, SEYTON, BOYD,  
OCHILTREE, HUME, ARBROATH, *and* MAXWELL.

*The younger* RUTHVEN.

THE MASTER OF OCHILTREE, *son to Lord Ochiltree.*

THE MASTER OF MAXWELL, *son to Lord Herries.*

SIR JAMES MELVILLE.

SIR ROBERT MELVILLE.

SIR GEORGE DOUGLAS, *uncle to Darnley.*

SIR WILLIAM DOUGLAS *of Lochleven.*

GEORGE DOUGLAS, *his brother.*

SIR WILLIAM KIRKALDY *of Grange.*

LORD ROBERT STUART, *Abbot of St. Cross.*

DU CROC, *Ambassador from France.*

SIR NICHOLAS THROGMORTON, *Ambassador from England.*

JOHN HAMILTON, *Archbishop of St. Andrew's.*

JOHN LESLIE, *Bishop of Ross.*

ARTHUR ERSKINE, *Captain of the Guard.*

ANTHONY STANDEN and SIUART OF TRAQUAIR, *Equerries.*

JOHN ERSKINE *of Dun.*

ANDREW KER *of Fauldlonside.*

HENRY DRUMMOND *of Ricarton.*

ARCHIBALD BEATON.

JOHN HEPBURN *of Bolton*, ORMISTON, HAY *of Talla*, *Conspirators with Bothwell.*

CRAWFORD, NELSON, TAYLOR, *servants to Darnley.*

NICHOLAS HUBERT, *surnamed PARIS, servant to Bothwell.*

THE PROVOST OF EDINBURGH.

ROBERT CUNNINGHAM, *steward to the Earl of Lennox.*

*Page and Girl attending on Lady Lochleven.*

*Burgesses, Citizens, Soldiers, Attendants, &c.*

TIME — MARCH 9, 1566, TO MAY 16, 1568

# BOTHWELL

Act III.—JANE GORDON

Act IV.—JOHN KNOX

Act V.—THE QUEEN





ACT III

*JANE GORDON*

TIME : FROM FEBRUARY 10 TO JUNE 11, 1567

SCENE I. *Bothwell's Apartment in Holyrood*

BOTHWELL, ORMISTON, HEPBURN OF BOLTON,  
*and other Gentlemen*

BOTHWELL

Is my knave sent for to me from the queen ?

HEPBURN

Ay, my good lord.

BOTHWELL

I had happier thoughts of him  
Who served us but unhappily last night :  
This Paris had been faithful, and his tongue  
That might have struck a sting into my fame  
Had done me loyal service, and let fly  
No word to bring me in disgrace of men  
When I stood friendless ; for which cause ye know  
I gave him place with the queen's chamberlains  
And promise of more furtherance ; but this thing  
Has turned his six years' service into dust

And made his faith as running water slip  
Between my hands that held it for a staff ;  
For since I first brake with him of the deed  
He hath been for fear besotted like a beast.

## ORMISTON

'Faith, he was heavy enough of cheer last night,  
When you came forth, and the queen parted thence  
And hither to the bridal.

## BOTHWELL

By this hand,  
I came upon him glooming and withdrawn  
Up in a nook with face as of one hanged,  
And asked what ailed him to put on that gloom  
Or make such countenance there before the queen ?  
And I would handle him in such sort, I said,  
As he was never in his life ; by God,  
I had the mind to do it ; and he, *My lord,*  
*I care not what thing now ye do to me,*  
And craved he might get thence to bed, as sick,  
But that I would not : then as ye twain saw  
When came the wind and thunder of the blast  
That blew the fool forth who took wing for death,  
Down my knave drops me flatlong, with his hair  
Aghast as hedgehogs' prickles, and *Alas,*  
*My lord, what thing is this ?* and *He had seen*  
*Great enterprises, marry, and many of them,*  
*But never one that scared him so as this ;*  
*And such a thing would never have good end,*  
*And I should see it ;* by God I had a will  
To have set my dagger here into him, but yet  
I drew it not forth.

ORMISTON

I doubt you did not well ;  
'Tis of such stuff that time makes talebearers.

BOTHWELL

I would not strike him for old service' sake,  
Were he more dangerous to me ; but, God help,  
What hurt here can he do us ? I tell you, sirs,  
I think my star that was not swift to rise  
But hung this long time strangled in dead cloud  
Is even by this a fire in heaven, and hath  
The heat and light in it of this dead man's  
That it hath drunk up as a dew-drop drawn  
Into the red mid heat of its own heart ;  
And ye that walk by light of it shall stand  
With morning on the footless mountain-tops  
Crowned.

HEPBURN

There are crags yet slippery to be clomb  
And scaurs to rend their knees and feet who rise.

BOTHWELL

I have my hand here on the throat of time,  
And hold mine hour of fortune by the hair.  
Had I let slip this season I had fallen  
Naked and sheer to break myself on death,  
A cragsman crushed at the cliff's foot ; but now  
Chance cannot trip me, if I look not down  
And let mine eye swim back among slain fears  
To reckon up dead dangers ; but I look  
High up as is the light, higher than your eyes,  
Beyond all eagles' aeries, to the sun.

ORMISTON

You will be king?

BOTHWELL

Was I not crowned last night?  
The hand that gave those dead stones wings to fly  
Gave wings too to my fortune, and the fire  
That sprang then in our faces, on my head  
Was as the gold forefigured on a king's.

*Enter* PARIS

What says the queen? why shak'st thou like a cur?  
Speak, beast, or beastlike shalt thou fare with me;  
Hast thou not seen her?

PARIS

Ay, my lord.

BOTHWELL

Ay, dog?  
What said she to those gaping eyes of thine?

PARIS

My lord, I found her in her mourning bed  
New-hung with black; her looks were fresh and staid;  
Her fast being broken only with an egg,  
Ere she addressed herself again to sleep  
She spake but three words with me of yourself,  
How might you fare, and when she rose by noon  
You should come to her; no more.

BOTHWELL

So let her sleep ;  
There are that watch for her. For thine own part,  
I charge thee tell me one thing : in thy life  
Didst thou pledge ever promise or plight faith  
To that dead mask of kingship ?

PARIS

Nay, my lord.

BOTHWELL

Seest thou not now these gentlemen my friends ?  
Not one of them but for troth's sake to me  
And loving service hath cast all things off  
To do as I shall and to fare as I ;  
And if thou think'st, whom no faith bound nor love  
To serve that fool or come 'twixt hell and him  
To buckler him from burning—if thou think'st,  
That art my servant, thou hast sinned toward God  
In our offence, this lies not to thy charge  
But mine who caused thee do it, and all the lords'  
Who with me took this work in all their hands.  
And if now thou have will to go thy way,  
Thou shalt depart right soon with recompense ;  
But for all pains that can be put to thee  
Thou must not take this on thy tongue again.

PARIS

My lord, I will not.

BOTHWELL

Sirs, with me it rests  
To take some order for the burial soon

When the queen's eye hath dwelt upon him dead,  
As shall be, lest men say for shame or fear  
She would not see him ; then with all privy speed  
He shall by night be given hcre to the worms.  
His raiment and his horses will I take  
By the queen's gift ; for being now highest in place  
I will present me kinglike to the time  
And come before men royal, who shall know  
I stand here where he stood in all their sight ;  
So seeing at once if I be lord or no  
He that shall hate me risen shall need take heart  
To strike betimes, or strike not. At this hour  
Bold heart, swift hand, are wiser than wise brain.  
I must be seen of all men's fear or hate,  
And as I am seen must see them and smite down  
Or lie for ever naked underfoot  
Down in the dark for them to triumph on.  
That will I not ; but who shall overthrow  
Must kill me kingly, sworded hand to hand,  
Not snared with gin or limetwig as a fool,  
Nor hurled by night up howling into heaven,  
But in the sun's eye weaponed. Some of you  
Go forth and find what noise is in the streets,  
What rumours and how tempered on men's tongues :  
When I pass out among them I will take  
Some fifty with me to my guard, and ride  
As might their king ride. Be it proclaimed abroad  
In mine own name and Maitland's and Argyle's  
Two thousand pounds shall pay that good man's pains  
Who shall produce the murderers of our king  
For just and sudden judgment. In few days,  
If Mar be not mine unfriend and his own,  
Who holds the keys of Stirling, we shall pass  
With some of counsel thither, and there bide

Till the first reek of rumour have blown by,  
Then call in spring our parliament again.

HEPBURN

Your heart of hope is great ; with God to friend,  
A man could speed no better than your hope.

BOTHWELL

I tell thee, God is in that man's right hand  
Whose heart knows when to strike and when to stay.  
I swear I would not ask more hope of heaven  
Than of mine own heart which puts fire to me  
And of mine own eye which discerns my day.  
And seeing the hope wherein I go now forth  
Is of their giving, if I live or die,  
With God to friend or unfriend, quick or dead  
I shall not wake nor sleep with them that fear  
Whose lives are as leaves wavering in a wind,  
But as a man foiled or a man enthroned  
That was not fooled of fortune nor of fear. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. *Another Room in the same*

*The body of DARNLEY lying on a bier. Two men in attendance*

FIRST ATTENDANT

There is no wound.

SECOND ATTENDANT

Nor hath the fire caught here ;  
This gown about him is not singed ; his face

Is clenched together, but on hair nor cheek  
Has flame laid even a finger ; each limb whole  
And nothing of him shattered but the life.  
How comes he dead ?

## FIRST ATTENDANT

Tush, tush ! he died by chance.  
Take thou no pain to know it. For mine own mind,  
I think it was his sickness which being full  
Broke as a plague-spot breaks and shattered him  
And with his fleshly house the house of stone  
Which held him dying ; his malady it was  
That burst the walls in sunder and sent up  
A ruin of flaming roofs and floors afire.

## SECOND ATTENDANT

Was not his chamber-fellow's corpse as his ?

## FIRST ATTENDANT

Ay, woundless as they say and unconsumed ;  
I know not surely. But the blast that made  
The good town ring and rock here through her  
streets  
Shook not all sleepers in the house to death ;  
Three souls have crept forth of the wreck alive  
That slept without his chamber.

## SECOND ATTENDANT

What say these ?



## FIRST ATTENDANT

What should they say, with thanks for their own hap,  
But that this chance is dire and this man dead?  
There is no more yet for sage lips to say,  
That would not timeless be stopped up with earth.

*Enter the QUEEN and BOTHWELL*

## QUEEN

Leave us, and after take your charge again.

## FIRST ATTENDANT

We must forbear her till her moan be made. (*Aside.*)  
[*Exeunt Attendants.*]

## QUEEN

Let me look on him. It is marred not much;  
This was a fair face of a boy's alive.

## BOTHWELL

It had been better had he died ere man.

## QUEEN

That hardly was he yesterday; a man!  
What heart, what brain of manhood had God sown  
In this poor fair fool's flesh to bear him fruit?  
What seed of spirit or counsel? what good hope

That might have put forth flower in any sun ?  
We have plucked none up who cut him off at root,  
But a tare only or a thorn. His cheek  
Is not much changed, though since I wedded him  
His eyes had shrunken and his lips grown wan  
With sickness and ill living. Yesterday,  
Man or no man, this was a living soul ;  
What is this now ? This tongue that mourned to me,  
These lips that mine were mixed with, these blind eyes  
That fastened on me following, these void hands  
That never plighted faith with man and kept,  
Poor hands that paddled in the sloughs of shame,  
Poor lips athirst for women's lips and wine,  
Poor tongue that lied, poor eyes that looked askant  
And had no heart to face men's wrath or love  
As who could answer either,—what work now  
Doth that poor spirit which moved them ? To what  
use

Of evil or good should hell put this or heaven,  
Or with what fire of purgatory annealed  
Shall it be clean and strong, yet keep in it  
One grain for witness of what seed it was,  
One thread, one shred enwoven with it alive,  
To show what stuff time spun it of, and rent ?  
I have more pity such things should be born  
Than of his death ; yea, more than I had hate,  
Living, of him.

## BOTHWELL

Since hate nor pity now  
Or helps or hurts him, were we not as wise  
To take but counsel for the day's work here  
And put thought of him with him underground ?

QUEEN

I do but cast once more away on him  
The last thought he will ever have of mine.  
You should now love me well.

BOTHWELL

Ay should I, sweet.

QUEEN

I think you shall ; it were more hard than death  
You should not love me.

BOTHWELL

Nay, not possible.

QUEEN

I think God never set in flesh of man  
Such heart as yours would be to love me not.

BOTHWELL

Will you give order for his funeral ?

QUEEN

Ay.

But if you loved not—I would know that now  
That I might die even this day, and my hands  
Shed no more blood nor strive more for your sake ;  
For if I live whose life is of your love  
I shall take on them more of toil and blood,  
To stain and tire them labouring all their life.

I would not die bloodguiltier than is need,  
With redder hands than these and wearier heart,  
And have no love to cleanse and comfort them.  
For this man, I forgive him.

BOTHWELL

For which fault ?

QUEEN

That he touched ever and defiled my life  
With life of his and death. I am fain to know  
You do not love me for his sake the less  
Who so have soiled me with him.

BOTHWELL

Shall I not  
Swear it with him for sponsor to mine oath ?

QUEEN

Kiss me before his face here for a sign.

BOTHWELL

You have strange doubts and dreams.

QUEEN

I will not have.  
When part we hence, and whither ?

BOTHWELL

I have word  
Your careful warden, the grave lord of Mar,  
Will hardly give my followers at your prayer

Place to come in to Stirling at our back.  
Here now the streets begin to sound and swarm  
So that my guard is now for more than pride ;  
Wherefore I hold it well we take with us  
Some friends of our own counsel, as Argyle,  
Huntley, my brother-in-law that shall be none,  
With Maitland and the archbishop, and set forth  
To the lord Seyton's, who shall give us house  
Till this loud world fall stiller than it is.

## QUEEN

Be it where you will, and how ; do you but lead,  
Would I not follow naked through the world ?  
For him of whose dead face mine eyes take leave  
As my free soul of shameful thought on him,  
Let him have private burial some fit night  
By David whom he slew. I mind me now  
'Tis not a year since I fled forth with him  
Even through the graves where he shall lie alone,  
And passing through their dusty deadly ways  
For some few minutes of the rustling night  
I felt his hand quake ; he will quake not now  
To sleep there all night long. See you to that.  
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III. *Seyton Castle*LORD HERRIES *and* SIR JAMES MELVILLE

## HERRIES

So stands it, sir ; she hath put into his hands  
Besides the lordship of the port of Leith

The castle's government of Edinburgh,  
Of Inchkeith and Blackness, three master keys  
That keep the doors o' the kingdom ; in Dunbar  
He sits now lord, and gathers men to hold  
By her next gift Dumbarton : while she sends  
A privy message for a priest to plead  
With the French king, that by his mother's mouth  
And his own hand hath warned her, if her lord  
Sleep unrevenged, she being so shamed henceforth  
Must hold them for her enemies, and put off  
All thought to flee for fear into their guard  
From peril of her subjects—even to him  
She sends for payment of her dower foregone  
Wherewith to levy hireling bands in France  
With but her babe for captain called, and be  
Fenced round at least with all of these she may,  
Of whose despatch none here must know before,  
Nor, if these fail her, of her frustrate aim ;  
Then, ere her mourning month be here played out  
With hound and horn and soldierlike delights  
To recreate her natural heart and life,  
She must repass to Holyrood and meet  
The ambassador from England, Killegrew,  
Who comes to find folk sorrowing and in fear  
With counsel for our peril and our grief,  
And falls upon us feasting ; and to him  
She plights her faith that by this parliament  
Shall Bothwell have his trial, and the cause  
Be sifted clear in the eyes of all good men ;  
Wherewith content he parts, or discontent,  
I know not, but is gone ; and she come back  
Takes heed no more than of a harp unstrung  
What plaint or plea, what charge or menace comes  
From her lord's father, but to his demand

For convocation of the nobles made  
Returns her word their house shall meet in spring,  
And puts his charge by lightly as she may.  
Of all this nothing in my mind goes well.

## MELVILLE

Nor aught in mine. Your fellows of her faith  
Who stand as yet in England on her side  
Will fall off from her, hearing what I doubt  
All ears will hear too soon : I have shown it her  
By letter sent me from a faithful Scot  
That long hath wrought among them on her part  
And freely thence wrote all his fear for me  
To lay before her, and his grief to hear  
Such bruit of her intent as could but slay  
The opinion of her judgment, who must lose  
By such design God's favour and her fame,  
And in each kingdom that should kiss her hand  
Each man's heart born her heritage, and miss  
The noble mark she shot at ; I, adjured  
Of him that wrote to bring this in her eye,  
Gave her to read it, which she gave again,  
Silent ; then came the secretary to me  
A short while thence, and took me by the hand,  
Desiring me as by the queen's desire  
To let him see it, who had given him late to know  
I had shown her a strange letter, and devised  
By mine own counsel for Lord Bothwell's wreck ;  
And having read, What thing was in my mind,  
He said, to do this, which being known to the earl,  
As shortly there was need to fear it should,  
Would cause him surely seek my life ? and I,  
It was a sore thing for true men to see  
So good a princess run on utter wreck

And no man be so far concerned in her  
As to forewarn of peril : he replied  
As one who had newly left her wroth, I had done  
More honestly than wisely ; bade me fly  
Ere the earl came up from dining ; and being flown  
I know he sought to slay me, who lay hid  
Till his main rage was slackened ; and the queen,  
Who had made him swear to seek no scathe of mine  
When at their meeting next she showed it him,  
Chid him as who would cause her to be left  
Of all her servants ; then he swore anew  
I should receive no harm ; whereof again  
Being advertised I spake with her, and showed  
She had never done me so much wrong as this,  
To make the letter a device of mine  
Which came even whence I had given her word ; and  
yet

Had it not come, I had held me bound to speak  
Freely, with reverence and humility,  
My thought as did that letter, being of mind  
At one therewith ; but she would give no ear ;  
Nor is there force in counsel or man's wit  
To avert this ill she binds upon herself,  
Who breaks the bonds in twain that hold her friends,  
And fetters her own feet with gyves of steel,  
When she hath need of them to stand or flee  
Before the face of peril multiform  
That lightens on us flamelike : you, my lord,  
Whose love she hath proven, are not of me to learn  
The immediate feature of it.

HERRIES

Alas, not I ;

I have taken too much note thereof, and stand



Too near its fangs to live of them unscathed,  
Except I make haste hence.

MELVILLE

What haste, my lord?

HERRIES

I have spoken with her of their purpose blown  
From lip to lip already on men's breath,  
To loose the bonds that bind her lover yet  
By witness of the lady of Buccleuch,  
Who shall proclaim herself his paramour  
And precontracted to him by promise-plight,  
To prove his wife no lawful wife, but bound,  
Will she or no, and love him not or love,  
To sue divorce from him ; if all this fail,  
Then by remonstrance of their kindred blood  
Found some four cousinships away, this bond  
Shall melt or break that parts him from the queen.

MELVILLE

Why, ere his marriage with the Lady Jane  
She had her dispensation from the Pope,  
For the blood mixed between them, of all bars  
Which might have maimed it with impediment.

HERRIES

So had she, but they think to cover it  
As with a veil of invalidity  
Pretexting for pretence, or with dumb show  
Darkly disclaimed ; this shall not cumber them ;

And they will buy compliance and goodwill  
Of Huntley to his sister's putting off  
By restoration of his forfeit lands.

MELVILLE

All tongues i' the land will as one mouth of fire  
Cry death and shame against it.

HERRIES

So said I.

MELVILLE

So said you to her ?

HERRIES

I said so ; whereat she,  
As 'twere half smiling in a wondering shame,  
Half mourning to be guiltlessly misjudged,  
With fervent eyes' fall and with scornful lips  
Protests me, never had she thought of it.  
Wherefore I hold it ill to tarry here.

MELVILLE

Your wisdom shall do well to spare no speed,  
But get it gone from eyeshot of them both.

HERRIES

I know it ; yet would I plead again with her  
For pity and honour of the imperilled state,  
That should be shaken with her fall to death  
And the crown shattered into shards of gold  
For as a wolf anhungered and awaked

That long hath slept and starved, with foodless  
dreams

Assuaging its blunt fangs through bloodless hours,  
The common people, that in dumb dim rest,  
With heartless hopes assuaging its blind heart,  
Hath fed for ages on itself asleep,  
Shows now the keen teeth and the kindled eyes  
Of ravening heads innumerable, that gape  
And glare about the wide ways of the world,  
Seeking their meat of God ; and if he fail,  
Then of the devil that burns in minds of men  
Rebellious, whom their heat of heart eats up  
Till the fire fasten on authority  
To lay red hands of ruin on all state  
And leave in ashes empire ; as of late  
This Ket in England, and his like that swarm  
At heel of the new creeds in Lutheran lands  
To pluck the sun out of the heaven of rule,  
And leave men dark and kingless. Hath not Knox  
Struck with his fangs of speech on monarchy  
No less than on the Church that first was stung,  
Preaching for all men knowledge equally  
And prostitute and perilous freedom shared  
With all blear eyes, brute mouths, and unwashed  
hands,

That lust for change and take all fires for light,  
Except the sun's wherein their fathers walked ?  
And shall not these at any breach break in  
That flaws the sea-wall which forbade their sea  
To drown all banks that bound it ? She will make  
Of all that lived in Scotland hers and ours  
A ruin and republic of strewn wrecks,  
Ranks rent, bonds broken, all things orderless,  
A commonwealth of dead men's bones and dung,

Dust, mire, and blood, and one red rank of beasts  
That rage and revel in equality.

MELVILLE

'Tis true, the commons are as waters chafed  
Since this wind blew amongst them : wave by wave  
It lifts their heads up, and the murmuring air  
Breathes hard and blackens with the blast of change.

HERRIES

And were none touched with danger but herself,  
This yet were pity enough for tears of blood,  
So fair she is and less by place than kind  
Royal, so high and so assured of spirit,  
So full of all things all men love or fear,  
Heart's light and fire, a soul born winged, with eyes  
That mate the sun's eye and the lightning's ; yea,  
It were past count of pity, past men's thought,  
That she should fall for love's light sake self-slain.

MELVILLE

There were one way to serve her that would be  
Most thankless, being thankworthiest ; but none else.

HERRIES

That were no way for feet that would not walk  
Red as her enemies' did, whose passage shook  
With its near sound her life and fame ; such ways  
Let Morton take or Maitland's weaponed wit,  
Whose words are swords.

MELVILLE

It may be so they will.

HERRIES

Death ?

MELVILLE

Nay, who knows when death may come ?

HERRIES

Why, they

Who strike the spur into his fleshless side,  
Who prick him forward with their craft for goad,  
Or put for sword their hatred in his hand.  
They have done deeds of deadlier policy  
Than make submissive show toward Bothwell here,  
Then snare and slay him or put the queen in ward :  
Would they do this they might be serviceable  
But perilous must be, putting hand to work  
That treads nigh treason though for loyalty.

MELVILLE

Whoso may know their mind, it is not I.

HERRIES

She hath sent for Murray hither ; in his eye  
We may take note which way their faction looks.  
If yet toward violence and red-handed craft,  
This mood of hers will strip her for their strokes  
Naked, and leave us handless that would fight  
On her just side against them. God mend all !

*Enter the QUEEN, BOTHWELL, SEYTON, the MARIES,  
and Attendants*

QUEEN

The wind has moved my blood like wine ; I am full  
Even to the heart's root of its spirit of life.  
Flew not my hawk the last flight well, that sent  
The tumbling hern down from her highest ? I think  
You have none better. Is our brother come ?

SEYTON

He is now alighting, madam.

QUEEN

By this hand,  
I would when we must 'light from horse we might  
Take wing instead, and so what time we live  
Live ever at glad speed save when we sleep.  
It points and edges the dull steel of life  
To feel the blood and brain in us renew  
By help of that life lifting us, and speed  
That being not ours is mixed with us and serves.  
I would hold counsel and wage war and reign  
Not in walled chambers nor close pens of state,  
But or in saddle or at sea, my steed  
As a sea-wave beneath the wind and me,  
Or the sea serving as a bitted steed  
That springs like air and fire. Time comes, they say,  
When we love rest, house-keeping sloth, and calms ;  
To me I think it will not come alive.

## HERRIES

Madam, I would change yet one word with you  
Ere I go hence or others take your ear.

## QUEEN

So shall you, sir ; yet is my heart too light,  
And its live blood too merry from the chase,  
And all my life too full of the air of joy  
Whereon it mounts up falcon-like for prey  
And hovers at its wings' width ere it strike,  
To give wise words wise welcome ; yet what grace  
I may to your grave counsels will I show  
And modesty of audience. Tell my brother  
I shortly will receive him. [*Exeunt all but the QUEEN*  
*and HERRIES.*] My good lord,  
It is for that old honour and true love  
I bear your high name and your flawless faith  
That yet mine ear makes way now for your words,  
In trust they will not wound it for its pains  
With any tuneless or intemperate breath.

## HERRIES

Had I no heart, or in the heart I have  
No love to serve you, madam, and no faith,  
I had parted hence without more toil of tongue  
Or strife of speech unpalatable and harsh  
In ears made wide for music ; but in me  
Is heart enough to burn with fire of pain,  
If not to lighten with that fire their eyes  
For whose sake it consumes me, when I see  
Danger and death masked as true men and bold

Attend about them with sheathed knives in hand  
And shut mouths as of serpents. Let me not  
Incense again your flame of spirit and scorn  
With faint and void reiteration of dead words  
That spent in vain their spirit before : I speak  
Not now so much to move you as would God  
I had the might to move, but of myself  
Rather to save my soul of faith alive  
And my deep heart of duty toward your grace  
By speech though fruitless and by love though lost  
That will not pass forth silent and give way  
To loud-tongued ruin that shall speak too high  
For ears to close against it. Queen of Scots,  
Lady that have the loftiest life in hand  
Even yet that ever was of queen on earth,  
Last hope of men that hope through you in God,  
Last comfort of his Church, light of his lamp  
That men have nigh blown out with blasts of night ;  
O you to whose fair face and hand uplift  
The treble-kingdomed islands should turn back  
Out of the shadow of storm to follow them  
And in the shadow of faith instead lie down  
Beneath the wings that covered your crowned head,  
Even hers that brood above her fold and yours,  
The Church your mother's, that by no hand else  
Looks yet to gather three lands in and save—  
Who have the heart and the eye and the hour for this  
Which to none other God may give again  
So as you have them—you that should be writ  
In all the royal records of the world  
Saviour, the light and the right hand of God  
Shown in a woman, to bring back and build  
What was blown down or shed as dust on the air—  
You that have spirit and mind to apprehend



And to that apprehension put swift hand,  
Nor slow of soul nor fearful—you, our queen,  
And England's heir, that should make higher on earth  
The name of Scot than any star in heaven,  
And on the cleft growth of two thorny stems  
Bid one rose flower of Catholic royalty  
Not to be plucked or trampled—O, will you,  
So great, so fair and fearless as you are,  
That were you no queen, or such other one  
As no such high cause calls on, you would seem  
Not less a thing made to heroic end,  
A creature crowned and armed by God to bear  
His witness to his work, and in man's eye  
Stand signal-wise lighting the beacons sea—  
Will you put all this as a garment off  
And change it like a vesture? By your life  
Which is the life of this land's majesty,  
And your high soul which is our spirit of hope,  
Slay not all these; help them that trust in you;  
Help God, lest we believe him for your sake  
Ill-minded toward us for our sin, to turn  
This empire to a populous wilderness,  
A riotous desert where things vile are crowned,  
And high made low and low things set on high,  
And rule trod under with foul feet and bare,  
And kingdom parcelled by hard hands and red;  
Pity this people; give not up your realm  
To its own madness that takes fire at yours  
And lights its ruin at your own ruin, to run  
By that blind light darkling to death and hell;  
Cast not your name down under foot of men  
For such ill cause as loveless love that is  
Light lord of foolish women, or such will  
As wherewith men self-slaughtered gird themselves.

For shame and pity and peril shall be they  
Who shall attend and wed you to your will,  
And the ring broken of the kingdom's peace  
That is yet whole and circular as a crown  
Shall be the new ring on your wedded hand.

QUEEN

Have I not said I never thought of it?

HERRIES

I but beseech you keep from thought of it,  
Or from such show as puts it in men's minds.

QUEEN

If this be all your counsel or your care,  
You crave but what you have ; I have given no cause  
By favour shown to faith and loyal hearts  
For the evil-witted world to tax me of love.  
Twice have you had mine ear now to this tale,  
And thrice I pray you that you seek it not.

HERRIES

I shall no more. God keep your grace in joy !

*Enter BOTHWELL and MURRAY*

QUEEN

Good morrow, brother ; and you, my lord, good day,  
Since you go hence.

BOTHWELL

Goes my lord from us yet?

HERRIES

Even now I take my leave. Farewell, my lords,  
And God be with your counsels. *[Exit.]*

BOTHWELL

Nay, he shall.  
The queen was fain to have your voice, my lord,  
Ere she go back to the distempered town.

MURRAY

That shall she have, sir.

QUEEN

Brother, we hear word  
How the good town is troubled of lewd men  
With libels writ and hung about the streets  
That in our servants' name deface our own  
With fierce invention : wherefore I desired  
Your counsel with my lord here and good help  
For satisfaction of well-willing men.

MURRAY

Even such will tell you it mislikes the town  
That Lennox, as they say, should be debarred  
From entrance save with six men and no more  
To hold his cause up on the trial day,  
And the main witness on his part refused

As under charge of treason for his words  
Set forth in writing on the Tolbooth gates :  
This makes them doubt of justice to be done  
And brood or babble of devised delay,  
With tongues and minds diverse and dangerous.

QUEEN

What,

Shall one proclaimed our traitor pass unscathed  
To bear again false witness, for whose sake  
The ports are guarded, and the skipper marked  
For death who helps him from this kingdom forth  
To mock the judgment whence he stands attaint  
Of foregone treason, and must now stand free,  
And the law loose him and receive his word  
As a true man's and taintless? What are they  
Whom by such witness Lennox would impeach  
Besides my lord here who shall answer him?

MURRAY

James Balfour, and your outland serving-folk,  
Sebastian, Joseph Rizzio, with two French,  
John of Bordeaux, and Francis, of your train.

QUEEN

They shall have trial, and answer it.

MURRAY

'Twere best

They did so soonest ; time grows full of tongues ;  
There was one late went through the streets by night  
With four or five accompanied for guard

That would let none take knowledge of him, crying  
Of his own guilt most lamentably on God,  
*Lord, open heaven and pour down of thy wrath*  
*Vengeance on me and them that have cut off*  
*The innocent blood ;* whom the chief magistrates  
Have seized and cast into the four thieves' pit ;  
But still his cry hangs in the common ear.

QUEEN

Some traitor hired or madman : but I sent  
To seek the comfort of your hand and help  
For weightier cause than of such tongues.

MURRAY

What cause ?

QUEEN

That shall he show who bears most part therein ;  
Yet are you parcel of it, and I myself  
For love of both and honour toward you. Speak.  
[To BOTHWELL.

BOTHWELL

My lord, I doubt not but your heart conceived  
Never that thing whereto being done you feared  
To set your hand in sign ; I therefore pray you  
To look upon the charge for which I stand  
In the land's eye accountable, as one  
That was consenting with the rest our friends  
To what for my poor profit was not done  
Nor only plotted for no end but mine ;  
And for the part your honour has herein  
To underwrite the bond that writes me safe  
And set your name for seal upon my side.

## QUEEN

So much would I beseech you too ; the bond  
By you subscribed here in my lord's defence  
Shall be the signet of your faith and love  
Set on my heart and his that honour you.

## MURRAY

I would my duty might in all things serve  
No less your honour than maintain mine own ;  
But I will set no hand to any bond  
Shall bind me to defence or fellowship  
Of deeds whereof I know myself no part.  
I gave consent to no more than divorce  
Between two hands mismated, king's and queen's,  
Whereby the kingdom's heart was rent in twain,  
And reconcilment found not where to stand ;  
But of no red and secret bond of blood  
Heard I the bruit before the deed took fire.

## BOTHWELL

Will you so swear ? what, none ?

## MURRAY

I have said ; and you  
That reft your kinsman Balfour by device  
Out of my hand and thwarted judgment, see  
Your heart be set not now to climb too high  
A stair whereon the foot that slips grows red  
And stumbling once in blood falls whence nor wing  
Nor hand can lift it from the pit again.

## QUEEN

Vex not yourself lest he should fall or stand  
With whom you stand or fall not.

## BOTHWELL

My desire  
Was toward no help of riddling counsellors,  
But of such friends as speak with hand for tongue  
And acts for parables ; your wit, my lord,  
Is nothing of the queen's need nor of mine.

## MURRAY

It may be, no ; but to make trial of that,  
Ere I take ship for France, the ways being barred  
By force and strife through Flanders to the south  
And those fair towns that with her highness' leave  
Shall call me guest awhile in Italy,  
I am bound for London, where I fear and hope  
My tongue may serve her more than here your hands  
If it make fair her cause in English eyes.

## BOTHWELL

What hath her cause to do with their bleared sight,  
Or with her name their judgment ? who need care  
What colour we that breathe with our own lips  
Wear in the mist made of their breath far off ?

## MURRAY

The ambassador that bore her last word back  
Hath but made way for one at point to come  
Whose message, carrying weight as in wise ears

It needs must carry, will take form and force  
From present witness of his eye that reads  
What mind is borne here and what work is done,  
What judgment or what counsel most bears weight ;  
Which it imports us for this land's great sake  
That the English queen misknow not nor misread  
For fault or fraud of darkling evidence.

## BOTHWELL

And you it is must give those blind eyes sight,  
Shape to the shadows of that ignorance, form  
To their loose judgment of us ? What have we,  
What hath our Scotland here or queen of Scots  
To do with English tongues ? can we not strike  
Nor stand nor walk alone, but for our need  
Must use their hands and feet, their wits and eyes,  
To help us live or live not ? By my life,  
Which is not held in pawn yet of their leave,  
I had rather be an English horse or ass  
Than on these terms a Scot, to square my will  
By their inscribed conditions.

## MURRAY

At your will  
Lies your own way of life ; not yet this land's,  
Nor theirs that living should be lords of it.  
Madam, to God's care I commend your grace  
Who take with careful heart my leave of you,  
Lest you too much should lack the care of men.

## QUEEN

Be not too careful for my sake ; your leave  
Was given ere you could take it. Sir, farewell.



MURRAY

Farewell, as you shall will it.

[*Exit.*]

BOTHWELL

God be with you !

Your wisdom shall not be so hot of foot  
But it may be outspeeded. If it lay  
Plots with the stranger, our prevention here  
Must pluck the fangs out of its craft ; and first  
With his own hand shall Huntley draw the bond  
Whereto will we set ours in pledge ere long  
To make them fast by contract, I being free  
To plight mine own, as by consent unbound  
From hers that was my wife pretended ; you,  
Being by this troublous time bent and inclined  
To seek some stay in wedlock and put off  
The weak estate of widowhood, yet loth  
For worthy reasons of grave strength to choose  
Again a stranger subject, have made choice  
Of me desertless for my fair deserts,  
And purpose even on heel of my divorce  
For their good cause to wed me ; this subscribed  
Shall in my keeping be laid up, and straight  
Hence must we back to that loud town of yours  
And take our danger by the throat ; proclaim  
At once my trial ; if it be possible,  
Before word come from England ; let the post  
That brings you counsel of Elizabeth's  
Find the cause judged and the cry fallen again  
And no link hanging of the gyves of law  
Round our free feet and steadfast.

QUEEN

Ah, not mine,  
That are fast bound and yet can stand not fast  
Except my love's strength hold them up, and strike  
These iron toils in sunder. If the bond  
Could bind and loose indeed, knit and unknit  
Hands that must part from hands that are to meet,  
With force of more than writing, all my heart  
Should bleed glad drops to sign and seal it. Sir,  
Here was again our enemy in mine ears  
Forewarning me of marriage ; the same tongue  
That was before a serpent at your heel  
Shot out anew to sting it ; but you know  
The craft of this state horseleech, that by fraud  
Takes pleasure to bear all the world in hand  
That no one can be sure of him, and we  
May least of all be by such lips allured  
To trust and find them dangerous.

BOTHWELL

Nay, by God,  
I mind me how he left his neighbour friends  
In his faith's name to hang for hostages  
Whose necks paid forfeit of his broken bond  
And made his oath a halter for the Lairds  
Of Lochinvar and Garlies. By my life  
That this keen tongue would strike at, in my mind  
It were the best work worth a good man's hand  
To quit them on Lord Herries.

QUEEN

No, let be ;  
You will unpeople me this land of friends ;

Mine he must live, or lose his name, and yours  
For my name's sake he shall be.

BOTHWELL

So might I  
Find at his hands such friendship as they twain  
Whose throats for him were writen ; and such a friend  
Is he that stands behind our deed, and says  
He never heard of manslaying, fie, not he,  
Our darkling brother with close lips and clean,  
The blood was no part of his bond, he says,  
That his eyes winked on while his hand was dry ;  
He will not bear us witness nor take part  
With me that have done more than blink at blood.  
He will to London, but to speak for you,  
That will he, being a kindly man of kind,  
Whole-blooded in his love and faith to you,  
God wot, no bastard in his brotherhood.  
I would give God a year out of my life  
That I have kinglike hope to live with you  
For one sweet breath of time to strike at him  
And let my sword's lip drink his body dry  
And with one deep kiss drain his flesh of blood.  
Who smells not by the savour of his faith  
On what close nest of foul and fledgling hopes  
His trust sits brooding to build up himself  
By overthrowing of that crowned head which keeps  
His misbegotten forehead bare of gold—  
And with my hand shall keep it ?

QUEEN

Ay, though all  
That breathe on earth mine enemies at his beck  
Rose by the light of his ambiguous eyes

With his sheathed hand to strike, and leave ungirt  
This forfeit head with empire : but I know  
A stronger hand bared for my help and stay,  
This that I touch, this that I love ; the star  
That points my feet on pilgrimage, the staff  
That stays my steps back to that troublous town  
Whereof they are weary, yet would halt not now,  
But tread more fleet than fire their fiery way  
To that fair end where they were fain to be.  
We will set forth to-morrow.

BOTHWELL

Ere we go,  
I will take order that men's tongues be clipt  
Who show too broad their conscience of remorse ;  
There was a knave of Balfour's in our trust  
That hath by this, being found unsure of mouth,  
Resigned it to the counsel-keeping worm.  
If more there be that live not stingless yet,  
The same dumb mouth that has nor lips nor tongue  
Must open for them privily ; the grave  
Hath gorge enough for all such secret food,  
And will not babble of the hands that feed.  
For them that being in blood of our own kind  
Will stand elsewhere against me than in court,  
I will make present proffer of myself  
To answer them in arms.

QUEEN

You shall not fight.

BOTHWELL

Not if no need be.

QUEEN

There shall be no need.  
Not in this cause, you shall not need to fight.  
We will set on the trial presently,  
And after we may sleep with no blood more.

SCENE IV. *The Upper Chamber in Holyrood**The QUEEN and MARY BEATON*

QUEEN

Is it not hard on ten ?

MARY BEATON

At point to strike.

QUEEN

This forenoon will outlast the night for length.  
How looks the morning ?

MARY BEATON

Like the time of year ;  
The heaven is red and full of wind ; the clouds  
Are rent and routed of the striving sun  
Like a lost army.

QUEEN

Is there no noise abroad ?

MARY BEATON

The throngs grow thick in rumour ; faces scowl,  
Eyes burn, brows bend, and all the cry o' the crowd  
Waits to break forth but till a fire-flaught fall  
To make the dumb brands speak and shoot out flame  
When he shall pass for whom it waits to burn.  
Yet have I seen as great a throng from hence  
As frets there now.

QUEEN

I would he had thought to-day  
To ride with doubled guard. What brawl is there ?

MARY BEATON

The messenger from Berwick, as I think,  
That would have entrance to you, and is thrust back  
By the lord Bothwell's kin that keep the gates.

QUEEN

What, here so soon ? I will not see him till night.  
I am asleep ; if there be brawls i' the court,  
Call out the troopers, bid my French guard forth  
To quell all rioters.

MARY BEATON

They are of your own part  
That make the brawl, my lord's men and your guard  
That press about the gateway.

QUEEN

The cry sinks ;  
Is he not come, that so their noise is fallen ?

MARY BEATON

And Maitland with him ; he signs them silent, takes  
From the English messenger a letter sealed,  
And leaves all still.

QUEEN

I prayed him see me first  
Before he rode to trial. All will be well,  
If he have stayed their storm, and keep his heart  
High as his fortune.

*Enter BOTHWELL*

Is that brawl at end ?

BOTHWELL

Here is a letter by a hot-foot post  
Brought from Sir William Drury, that his queen  
Through him commends her counsel in to you  
And bids you, or my thought belies it, show  
All favour and furtherance to your enemy's plea,  
Lennox, whose cause she finds most fair, and would  
not

For your own sake see slighted or put by,  
Lest your fame bleed ; look if she say not so ;  
Else I know nothing of her maiden mind,  
Who sometime lived her prisoner.

QUEEN

Let that rest ;  
But tell me what the spring was of this noise  
That shook our hearing ; would he speak perforce,  
This English post, though bidden back, with me ?

## BOTHWELL

But that our fellows thrust him from the gate ;  
My captain of the castle, a stalwart guard,  
The Laird of Skirling, that I put in charge,  
Called to the guide aloud, he should be hanged  
For bringing English villains through to us here,  
And hands were there to reive the rope to him ;  
Then drew your guard together and our troops,  
Whose musters line the straitened streets with steel  
That holds embanked their muttering multitudes  
Till I ride through ; and those within the gates  
Hurtled together with blind cries and thrusts,  
But at my sight fell silent as a sea  
Settling, that growls yet with the sunken wind,  
And holds its peace with unslaked wrath ; then I  
Took from the pressed and labouring messenger  
His letter for your hand, who were not risen  
And should ere night receive him ; so I said,  
And thus it shall suffice you do, so be it  
We bear the bell to-day in parliament,  
Where I should be by this at bar, to stand  
And make mine answer.

## QUEEN

I am not sick of fear,  
Yet my heart loathes its burden of this hour  
And beats and drops like a bird wounded. Nay,  
I do not hold you ; go ; 'tis but my hand  
Fastens on yours ; my heart would have you gone,  
And here again to assure me of good speed.  
Whom have we of the judges on our side,  
Tell me once more, whom doubtful-coloured, whom



Our enemies certain ? let me know it again,  
That I may read the bede-roll of their names  
Here over in my heart while you are gone  
To make it sure and strong, come evil or good,  
That neither find me heartless.

BOTHWELL

Of our part

The lord of Arbroath for the Hamiltons  
Is as his father's person, Chatelherault,  
And Cassilis a mainstay safe as steel ;  
Caithness and Herries are such friends of yours  
As love me less for your sake, yet I think  
Must strike to-day beside us ; one man most  
I would we might have razed out of the roll,  
Which is the assessor, Lindsay ; who shall be  
As poison to us ; and evil is our chance  
That Morton being of kin to your dead man  
Should not sit here to help, as but for this  
I would perforce have bound him to our side ;  
But let this be ; we shall bear bravely through  
For all their factions and fierce policies  
As knives ensheathed against us, or being foiled  
Find surer issue than they wot of. So,  
With such good hope as grows of a good heart,  
Give me God-speed.

QUEEN

God speed you as I pray  
You may speed ever ; all my prayer is spent,  
I can no more of wishing ; what I would,  
That must you will, having my heart in you,  
That beats but with your blood, thrills with your sense,  
Thinks with your thought, desires with your desire,

And lives upon your living. Where you go  
You bear me with you ; where your face is set  
Mine eye takes outlook, and where falls your foot  
I tread beside you silent. O, this day  
Shall be to us as the crown o' the wave that turns  
And bears inshore the lading of our lives  
With all the might of its great heart that breaks  
And brings us into harbour ; we shall stand  
High on the beach where it was spent, and praise  
The faithful hour that served us ; yea, even this  
Shall be a dear one to us, held fast at heart  
When all the pain and doubt of it is dead,  
And lovingly remembered ; you shall look  
From your high place beside your humble love  
With kingly eye on this dead day, and think  
How she that set her crown about your head  
And put her own beneath your foot, as now  
Bade you fare forth, and kissed you.

BOTHWELL

I am returned,

Ere I pass forth, already in my heart,  
With my cause crowned ; I cannot doubt of speed  
Who have your face before mine eyes as fire  
And keep your words' heat in mine ear to burn  
If I should shrink, and sting my spirit alive  
For love's and shame's sake. When we meet at night,  
A king's kiss will I set upon these lips  
That seal me royal ere I part. Farewell. [Exit.

QUEEN

I would mine eye were in my heart to go  
With that beside him ; but the heart it is

Sits now in the eye and follows where it may,  
But a street's length ; then part they, and the sight  
Turns back, but not the thought ; such wings it hath  
As the sight hath not, and is subtler nerved  
Than the swift spirit of the eye. O my life's light,  
This is not I that looks forth after you  
To feed her eyesight, but who leaves you not,  
Who rides beside you, breathes out of your lips,  
Looks through your eyes and triumphs in your heart,  
That unseen and inseparate thing is I.  
Look, he is up ; how royally he rides,  
As no king else on earth ! and waves to me  
As who should say, Be glad ; and glad I am,  
Who have the lordliest lover in the world  
And the most heart to love him. Ay, that steed  
Should be the higher of heart that feels him stride  
And moves the merrier-mettled ; by none such  
Was it before bestridden.

MARY BEATON

Was not this  
Lord Darnley's horse ?

QUEEN

Ay, when Lord Darnley was.

MARY BEATON

The horse he loved of all the rest and fed  
Ere he bestrode it ever ?

QUEEN

Like enough ;  
What ails it yet to have eaten of his hand ?  
It bears not now the worse a better man.

MARY BEATON

Nay, so it seems : it bounds not as in wrath,  
For aught I see, beneath him, but heaves up  
A sidelong head toward his new hand, and turns  
The light back on him of a joyful eye.  
So is it with only beasts that are beloved ;  
They have not hearts like ours.

QUEEN

What need they have ?

I would have nothing love him as I love,  
And had it heart it would ; yet I do think  
All beasts and men are mad that love him not  
As I should surely were I beast or man.  
He can no longer see my handkerchief ;  
Let us go in : I will not sit and wait  
With the street's hustling faces in my sight. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE V. *The High Court of Justice in the  
Tolbooth*

BOTHWELL, *with ORMISTON and others attending, at the bar ;*  
ARGYLE *presiding as Lord Justice ;* LINDSAY *as assessor ;* CAITH-  
NESS, CASSILIS, ROTHES, ARBROATH, MAXWELL, HERRIES,  
*and others, as jury ;* ROBERT CUNNINGHAM *as spokesman for*  
*Lennox.*

ORMISTON (*aside to BOTHWELL*)

Fie, look not down so at your feet, my lord ;  
What devil is this that irks you ? in your face  
A fool might read you what you are ; why, so  
Might a man look that were now going to death.  
Hold up your face for God's sake and look blithe ;

Alas and aye woe worth them that devised  
The thing that shall make all us mourn, I trow,  
For you that now look sadly.

BOTHWELL

Hold your peace ;  
I would not yet it were to do ; I have  
An outgate any way whereby to pass,  
As ye shall know, and soon. Trouble me not.

ARGYLE

My lords, ye have heard how to the indictment read  
The accused who stands at his own instance here  
Returns his plea of guiltless ; and thereon  
The accuser next invoked to approve his charge,  
Nor answering nor appearing, leaves no cause  
For us to judge ; but here in his default  
Is risen his servant to sustain his part  
And unawares among us unrequired  
Take up this charge here fallen, or stretch at least  
Some form across of pretext wide enough  
To cover with excuse this lack of charge,  
Which else might seem with emptiness of cause  
To mock your judgments ; wherefore, if ye will,  
He stands to plead before us.

CAITHNESS

We are content.

ROBERT CUNNINGHAM

My lords, I am here but in my master's name,  
The earl of Lennox, to declare what cause

This day constrains his absence ; which in brief  
Is first the brief time given for so great work,  
Next that he stands now naked of his friends  
And fellowship of servants to maintain  
His honour with the surety of his life ;  
And having help of no friend but himself,  
He hath laid on me commandment to desire  
A day sufficient for that weight of cause  
Which he shall have to keep it ; and if hence  
Your lordships at this present shall proceed,  
Here I protest that if the assize to-day,  
By their twelve persons that upon this charge  
Shall enter now on panel, speak him clear  
Who stands accused for murder of the king,  
It shall be wilful error in men's eyes  
And not abuse of ignorance, by this cause  
That all men know him for murderer ; and hereto  
Upon this protestation I require  
Of your high court a document to stand  
And set my lord's right here on register  
And those men's wrong who put it by to-day.

## ARGYLE

This is some reason if the ground be good  
Whereon his protest is built up, to excuse  
Default of witness by defect of time ;  
But here that ground is shaken, that we find,  
By letters of his own writ to the queen,  
My lord of Lennox earnest to bring on  
With forward expedition as of fire  
This cause for trial, and by all pleas intent  
To enforce this court make haste, and being convoked  
Despatch with breathless justice and short stay

The work wherein he seems to accuse us now  
For too much heat to move too fast, and mar  
The perfect end of trial with force of speed,  
Preventing him of witness. Wherefore then  
Was his own will so keen, his plaint so loud,  
So strong his protestation, to procure  
The speed too late reproached, too soon required?  
Here are we met for judgment, whom himself  
Bade the queen summon, with insistent heat  
And sharp solicitation urged of wrong,  
Nay, with the stroke of an imperative tongue,  
As though to impel some loth or laggard heart,  
And found instead a free and forward will  
In her to meet his own; here sits the court,  
There stands the man of him or his impeached  
To give them loyal answer; where sits he?  
Where speaks his proof? where stand his witnesses?  
What sentence of what judges shall be given  
Where none stands forth to accuse? Here are but  
words,  
Surmises, light and loud and loose, that blow  
In the air of nameless lips and babblers' breath  
From ear to ear about the wide-mouthed world;  
These are not for our judgment.

## CAITHNESS

We sit here  
To find if there be proof or likelihood  
More than of common tongues that mark a man  
Guilty, and know not why this man or that,  
But some name they must have to feed upon;  
And in my mind, where witness there is none  
Nor prosecution of a personal cause,  
Even should we err to find the accused man free,

It were no wilful error, nor this court  
In any just man's sight accountable  
As for unrighteous judgment, being cut off  
From evidence that it was met to hear ;  
Which we reject not, but require indeed,  
Yet can by no solicitous mean procure.  
Moreover, sirs, one flaw there is to note  
More evident than these proofs invisible  
Even in the letter of the charge, which bears,  
Ye see, the ninth day's date of February,  
When all we know that on the tenth it was  
This violence, by what hand soe'er, was done :  
So that I see not, for my simple part,  
How any man, for that which no man did,  
Should stand condemned ; for at this date assigned  
Was no such deed as this done in the world.

MAXWELL

Why, let the charge be drawn again, and straight ;  
The court is mocked in this.

CAITHNESS

How mocked, my lord ?

It is necessity of law, to keep  
Pure hands by perfect heed of flawless words ;  
And that you stood the dead man's friend alive  
Gives you not right nor reason to rise up  
And tax the reason or the right of law.

MAXWELL

Right ! where is right in all this circumstance,  
Or aught but wrong and broken judgment ? where



Justice or shame or loyalty, to try  
The truth whereon red fraud and violence tread  
And smother up the tongueless cry of blood?  
Are we not here to judge of murder done,  
And either from an innocent brow take off  
The spot of its suspicion, or convince  
The branded forehead of bloodguiltiness?  
Is there no counsel on the part accused  
Nor answer of defensive argument  
But of close-lipped evasion? and the court  
In this forsooth is mocked not! We shall stand  
The shameful signs of laughter to the world  
And loathing to men loyal, if this pass  
With no more trial but mockery, and the land  
Sit silent and attaint of innocent blood  
Before the face of all men that expect  
For our own sake what justice we shall show  
Or be defamed for ever.

## ARBROATH

Sirs, meseems

Where no charge is that no response can be,  
Where none impeaches, none can stand accused:  
And of what mouth what challenge is put forth,  
And on what witness what impeachment hangs,  
To implead of guilt the man we sit to try?  
Herein I say it is the court is mocked,  
Even all of us, and all the baffled land,  
And most this noble man that unaccused  
Stands at our bar and finds not to confront  
One witness, nor one enemy to beat back,  
But only as 'twere a wind that sounds, a breath  
That shifts and falters in the face of proof,

A blast that envy blows and fear breaks off,  
Disabled of its nature, by itself  
Frustrate and maimed of its own evil will.

## LINDSAY

Who talks of envious or of fearful heart?  
We hear the general judgment of the land  
Cry out for trial, and from foreign tongues  
Reproach cast on us that we cast off heed;  
What should we do for shame if in this cause,  
For doubt of one man's friends or of what power  
Might stand behind to buckler him at need,  
We durst not move, nor, though the world looked on,  
Show but a face of justice?

## CASSILIS

Must we set  
Our judgments by the common tongue that strikes  
And knows not what the hour is? or become  
Thralls to the praise and bondmen to the blame  
Of men by no tie blood-bound to our love,  
To make our lives look in their foreign sight  
Fair, lest they speak us evil? By my head,  
No Scot I hold him, but a strange man's knave,  
Whose spirit is shrunk or swollen by their breaths.

## ARGYLE

Well, let the votes be given, and each man's doom  
Affirm if in his true and equal mind  
The charge be proven upon my lord or no.  
How go the voices?

LINDSAY

By one half their dooms  
The lords here of the jury speak him free  
With clear acquittal of bloodguiltiness ;  
One half is voiceless.

ARGYLE

He then is proclaimed  
Of this high court not guilty, and the charge  
On trial stands not good against him. Sir,  
The court upon this plea declares for you  
You are found free of blood.

BOTHWELL

My noble lords,  
Being proved thus in your judgments clear of crime,  
Here on this door will I to-day set up  
My personal challenge in mine honour's right  
To meet in arms, before what judge he will,  
What gentleman soever undefamed  
Shall take upon him to confront my cause.  
For their lewd mouths who threat and wear no sword,  
Your judgment given to acquit me shall abash  
The malice it puts power into mine arm  
With might of right to baffle. Sirs, good day.

*[Exit with ORMISTON and his followers.]*

ARGYLE

Break up the court ; the cause is judged.

MAXWELL (*to* LINDSAY)

Is judged ?

I know not of such seed what stem will spring,  
But that fruit sour as gall and red as blood  
For men's false mouths must of this judgment grow  
I would I saw less surely than I see.

SCENE VI. *The High Street*

BURGESSES *and* PEOPLE

FIRST CITIZEN

What more of shame is laid up for us ? when  
Will heaven put forth a hand to touch with fire  
These naked sins and shrivel ? Have you heard  
What last lies bare for judgment ?

SECOND CITIZEN

Why, the last

Is not this half-hour's shame ; each stroke each day  
Strikes out a fresh one, that five minutes old  
Dies of the next forgotten. Yesterday  
Some talk was of the challenge yet, which now  
No man casts thought on, though by two good swords  
Was battle proffered : by the stout Laird first  
Of Tullibardine, in that brother's name  
Whom they for fear have taxed of treason, so  
To eschew his proof and peril ; he defies  
The challenger to combat, and requires  
England and France for judges of the field  
In person of their sovereigns ; this refused,

On such new plea as craven craft may find,  
With his queen's leave the ambassador himself  
Of England gladly with his own heart's will  
Would take the personal cause upon him.

FIRST CITIZEN

What !

Is it for fault of Scots to match and mate  
The pride in Bothwell swoln with innocent blood  
None but Sir William Drury may be held  
Worth his sword's wrath that walks by night ?

THIRD CITIZEN

Perchance

As for his queen he stands here deputy,  
And for our own her champion opposite  
Afield with swords' play or abed with lips',  
They hold the match more equal.

FOURTH CITIZEN

Nay, this news

Is grey of beard already ; hear you not  
How by this priestly parliament of ours,  
That to beguile us and for no goodwill  
Hath in the queen's name passed its act to affirm  
God's present gospel stablished in this realm,  
The murderer lives now twice absolved of blood  
And has by voice of prelates and of earls  
The assize allowed for good that purged him first,  
And shall be loosened of his marriage bond  
That twelve months since was tied ? his brother-in-law  
Shall have again his forfeit lands, and see  
His sister from her married bed thrust out,  
And stir no finger ; then without more stay

Who sees not where the adulterer's foot shall climb  
And by what head his own be pillowed ? nay,  
These papers hung against our walls by night  
Are tongues that prophesy but truth ; ye saw  
That likeness of a hare enringed with swords  
And of a mermaid crowned with burning eyes  
Who drove the hounds off with a two-thonged  
scourge

That coursed him trembling ; and her hand indeed  
Is found not slow to smite ; a law now lives  
Denouncing on his head no less than death  
Who shall set up, or seeing shall pluck not down,  
Such placards writ : the first soe'er who finds  
And leaves the writing that defames her friend  
To pass among the people, at her will  
Shall lie in bonds ; but if this brand herself,  
Then must the man that spared it or that set  
Die ; so the fire-eyed queen of shipwreck sings  
Death in their ears who sail this dangerous sea  
Whereon the ship reels of our staggering state,  
And with the flame shot from her eyes puts out  
The light of theirs that were as lightnings turned  
On her hare-hearted lover.

## THIRD CITIZEN

Yet they lack  
The power with boast or menace to seal up  
The lips of poor men ; but three days ago  
As she rode through the Grassmarket I heard  
How from their stalls the women cried on her,  
*God save your grace !* but with this added word  
That smote the smile upon her lips to death,  
*If ye be spotless of the dead king's blood.*

## SECOND CITIZEN

Such words and souls mount nigher God's ear and eye  
Than theirs who lent this man their hands to slay  
And tongues to purge him of their general sin,  
He of St. Andrew's and his under priest,  
Bishop of Ross, Leslie and Hamiltons  
Whose lips are bloody, and that double soul  
Argyle, that steers their faction ; and this crew  
Masked here as mouthpiece of the loathing land  
Must hide the people's heart and true men's truth  
With craft of prattling prelates ; yet such mouths  
As are unlocked and locked again with gold  
But gape till God shall pluck their tongues out.

## FIFTH CITIZEN

Yea,

Ye hear but this, and have to burn your ears  
No hotter news of these men, or what bond  
Bears written broad and brave such names as these  
Of earls and bishops ? this is strange yet, sirs,  
That fires my cheek to tell you ?

## SECOND CITIZEN

Why, men said  
There was a knot that met of these to sup  
Shut in with Bothwell's hackbutter for guard  
That drew round Ainslie's Tavern where they sat  
Like a strait hoop of steel to bind them safe  
And hold them fast from starting ; and some bond  
Of these his guests at Bothwell's prayer subscribed  
There was that bound them to him, against all foes  
That might impeach him of the crime discharged  
By the open court's acquittal, from this day

To take his part upon them and stand fast  
As to their own cause, being made subject all  
To slander and suspicion that but grows  
Of honour and high credit held with kings :  
So much we heard, and found not strange.

## FIFTH CITIZEN

Nay, this

Was but the grace that served their banquet in  
Of meats as strong as poison ; there ensued  
A pledge more mortal of a bond more base ;  
Considering this time present, how the queen  
Stood husbandless, and how the general weal  
Might let her not long live so, should her mind  
By thought of his true services be moved  
To take the earl Bothwell to her loving lord,  
They and each man there met of them should plight  
His honour, truth, and heart's fidelity  
To advance this marriage with all furtherance given  
Of counsel, satisfaction, and good help  
As soon as law might give it leave to be,  
And as their common enemy should esteem  
What man soever of evil will to them  
Might seek its hindrance ; and to this were set  
More than those names ye spake of ; be it for fear,  
For craft or vantage, none of these fell off  
Save Eglinton that slipped for shame away,  
And Morton with the secretary, that gave  
Their voice yet for this marriage, but would seal  
No general bond of service on his side :  
Save these, no priest or peer of them but lives  
His servant pledged ; their hands, tongues, counsels,  
                  hearts,  
His or not theirs, and all they mansworn men.



## THIRD CITIZEN

I have assurance of a true man's faith  
That word was writ of this confederacy  
To the English council from the Laird of Grange,  
Desiring knowledge with what ear their queen  
Shall take these tidings ; and albeit of late  
In all our trouble being found slow to help  
She hath lost the love here borne her, if her grace  
For this late murder will pursue revenge,  
She shall win all the hearts of all the best  
Again, he says, in Scotland ; who should be,  
With her good help and favour, swift to take  
This vengeance on them, and redeem from fear  
Their prince's life now trembling in the reach  
Of hands that slew his father ; for our queen  
Hath sworn she cares not for her lover's sake  
To lose France, England, and her natural land,  
And would go with him to the wild world's end  
Strip to her smock ere leave him.

## SECOND CITIZEN

Has he writ  
So much to the English court of her ? being ours,  
He should let shame keep silence of her shame.

## FIRST CITIZEN

What shame or silence can shut up for shame  
That which at noon walks clamorous of itself  
And boastful to be naked ? They will wed,  
Though thunder sound forth sin, and while God  
speaks  
Will kiss in sight of lightning.

## FOURTH CITIZEN

Was there not  
Some noise of strife arisen for fault of pay  
Among their crew of Bothwell's villains here  
That hold by force of hand the palace gates?

## SECOND CITIZEN

Such rumour was, for certain ; and himself  
Strode in among the middle mutiny  
Like a thieves' captain, and being braved of them  
Caught by the throat one that was lord o' the brawl  
And would have slain but for the throng that cried  
And drove upon him shouting, till for fear  
He was even fain to stop with promises  
Their mouths who clamoured ; which to see fulfilled  
Needs must he sit no lower than doth a king.

## THIRD CITIZEN

So then the gates are open, and the queen  
By leave of these her guards and him their chief  
May part in peace for Stirling now to see  
Her son in ward there of the castellan ?  
Where we, God knows, may give him thanks that  
one  
So wise as the earl of Mar and stout of heart  
Hath our born king in covert, who might sleep  
On that sweet breast that bore him not so safe  
As in a hand so honest.

## FIRST CITIZEN

Ay, God help,  
There is no surety in such housekeeping

As thunder comes forth of the sky by night  
To fall upon and burn it, yet no storm  
Save of men's making seen, nor fire in heaven  
Save what rose up from under. Verily,  
Our good lord Bothwell spake but truth who said  
To good James Melville how so strange a thing  
On earth was never known of: pity 'tis  
He could not come to look upon the corpse  
Though Bothwell bade him, seeing it was removed;  
It was his hapless chance to find it gone  
And in safe keeping of some secret hand  
That waited on it living; such things are:  
The worse hap his. They say it had no wound;  
So if by some mischance, as God forbid,  
The prince were reft unluckily of life,  
I think he should have none for eye to see  
That might read evil.

## THIRD CITIZEN

Who shall ride with her?

## SECOND CITIZEN

Why, no great train, lest being within the walls  
She take the child into her hand and give  
For better care to Bothwell's, with the keys  
That keep this castle too; but yet I think  
His hand nor hers shall put God's judgment back  
That waits to take them triumphing, and turn  
To tears their laughter and our grief to joy.

SCENE VII. *Stirling Castle**The QUEEN and HUNTLEY*

QUEEN

Will you go back from us ?

HUNTLEY

I like it not ;  
I do not see how this may be made good.

QUEEN

There is no flaw but in your fainter heart ;  
The way is fair and even ; I cannot think  
What seed is in men's hearts that brings forth fear  
Out of all season. Why are you so sad ?  
The thing is no more dangerous than it was  
When our first plot was laid ; nay so much less  
By how much these are ours whose names and bonds  
Speak on our side inscribed.

HUNTLEY

Madam, not so ;  
The earl of Sutherland, whose forfeiture  
Your grace but now remitted with mine own,  
When we shall meet my brother's men in arms,  
Will die before he yield you to their hands.

QUEEN

My lord, you have no brother of him now  
That was your sister's husband. I will write

To bid him bring up men enough to outmatch  
All that ride with us homeward, and so far  
That none the hardiest shall but think on fight.  
Three hundred hath your earl? then in his rank  
There shall be more than of our company,  
That I to spare men's blood may yield myself.

## HUNTLEY

It is too gross and foolishly devised ;  
When I spake last with him, he laid on you  
The charge to say where we should meet and when,  
And what should by contrivance plead for me,  
To save my name though you be yielded up  
Who ride with me for escort ; all this charge  
He lays on you, and bids me write again  
What you shall say by letter ; of himself  
He moves not yet ; and I beseech you think,  
Before you move him, in what enterprise  
You put to pledge your honour, that can never  
With honour wed him who being wedded man  
By force and violent hand hath borne you off ;  
Nor will my folk endure it, I wot well,  
But it must come to trial by hap of fight  
With doubt and accident of answering arms ;  
Where if we fail on our part, then on his  
Shall be the blame and bloody note of war  
Made on your personal guard ; but if we win  
That ride with you as followers, then is he  
The most forlorn of men revolted ; else,  
I shall be called of all that sin on earth  
The most unthankful traitor, who being now  
But newly of your grace remade your man  
Shall yield you up by treason without blows

Into a rebel's handling ; and the lords,  
I doubt, when they shall see you in his hold,  
Will think not much to unswear their oaths, deny  
Their words and hands as given through force c  
fear,  
And signed not of their hearts ; I pray, think of it,  
And take some other counsel to your mind.

## QUEEN

My lord, if you bear back my word to him,  
It shall be this : that seeing I am come so far,  
If of his own will he withdraw him not,  
For no persuasion nor for death itself  
Will I be brought to break my faith with him.  
For this you say of them that follow you  
And of your fear to bear a thankless name  
For my supposed betraying, you should by now  
With him have taken counsel of the chance,  
And not have thrown it here across my way  
Who have no choice to pass not over it,  
Seeing I may turn not back for life or death,  
For fear or shame or love of any man.  
As for the place, he doth not well to cast  
On me too even the election ; let him choose,  
And send me word, with pardon that herein  
I tax my lord of too much negligence.  
For those your followers whom you most misdoubt,  
You shall be wise to weed our train of them  
If any wise mean be to draw them forth.  
This is my counsel, of a simple wit  
And womanish, but not so vile at heart  
As to go back for danger from its faith.  
I pray you so report of me, and say,

When he shall ask you of my mind again,  
No more but this word only ; and farewell.

[*Exit HUNTLEY.*

This faint-heart honesty with half a hand  
Is falser found at need than falsehood's self,  
And ever was of me more hated. O,  
That I might take these hours as in my hand  
And men that yet divide us, with one grasp  
To gripe them dead and pluck his fang from time  
That waits to fasten on us unawares  
And make love mortal with the kiss that kills !  
A day and night are as a long life's length  
That part the hungering from the perfect hour,  
The void from the fulfilling.—Nay, come in.

*Enter MARY BEATON and PARIS*

MARY BEATON

Here waits my lord of Bothwell's messenger  
To bear your word back of Lord Huntley's mind.

QUEEN

Ay, that I found it trustless. Tell my lord  
He makes me mad to put his faith in him  
And to mistrust that which is wholly his,  
Even her true heart to whom he should have sent  
Word every day what she should do for him,  
And hath done nothing of it. I did say  
He should take heed of that false brother-in-law,  
Of whom his negligence and heedless faith  
Have put us in the danger ; on my part  
There has lacked nothing toward the work in hand,  
And had he not more changed his mind than I

Since I went from him, he should need not now  
By stranger's lips inquire of my resolve.  
Say how you see me, and till he send me word  
That I will here lie sick, as God he knows  
What health I have at heart ; would I were dead,  
For all I see goes ill ; but tell your lord  
This was not in his promise that I find,  
Nor no such matter ; but he lets me see  
What power has absence on him, to whose bow  
His hand has yet another string than mine.  
And look you warn him of this brother-in-law  
That he hath babbled of our enterprise  
Wherein he puts but forth a heartless hand,  
And in what great men's ears he well may guess  
Who knows which most are dangerous ; yet me-  
thinks

If still we have need to flatter them, so much  
Might naturally be pleaded on his part,  
That his good service and long amity  
Might well deserve his pardon and their love  
If past a subject's duty he put forth,  
Not to constrain me but assure himself  
Of such place nigh me that no foreign tongue  
May by strange counsel hinder my consent  
To that whereto he trusts his service shall  
Make him one day to attain ; with such excuse  
Shall he persuade them that he stands compelled  
To make pursuit against his enemies :  
And he may find fair words at will to say  
To Maitland most of all, through whose keen tongue  
We hold the rest by the ear ; but if at last  
The deed of our device mislike him now,  
Let him send word and leave not on my head  
The blame of all ; and if it like him yet,



Say I beseech him for the honour of God  
To come with no less force accompanied  
Than of three hundred men ; rather with more,  
For that is all the main part of my care ;  
Seeing as for Huntley, I assure myself  
He in our play shall henceforth bear no part  
But of an honest and a fearful man  
Whose thought and all his toil of heart it is  
To keep the load of treason from his name.  
Therefore I would not have my lord in all  
Trust or mistrust him, but be circumspect  
And take more power unto him.

PARIS

So shall I say ;  
Your highness hath no message more for me ?

QUEEN

God wot no time it is for us to change  
Tokens and toys of love ; yet I would send  
For very sorrow something but in sign  
That of my heart's grief I accuse not him  
For his cold writing or forgetfulness,  
His little memory of me and little care,  
And least of all his promise-breach, being now  
So far made his that what thing pleases him  
Is acceptable to me, and all my thoughts  
To his so willingly subdued, that all  
That comes of him proceeds of no such root,  
In mine esteem, as loveless negligence  
Nor any love's lack, but such only cause  
As I desire, being just and reasonable,  
Which is the final order he should take

For his own surety and honour, who alone  
Is my life's stay for which I only will  
Preserve it, and without which in this world  
My soul desires not but a sudden death.  
Bear therefore to him for testimony of me  
How lowly I submit me to his law  
In sign of homage this that I take off  
Of my head's ornament, which is the chief  
And guide of other members, as to say  
How being possessed of that as of a spoil  
Which is the principal he needs must have  
The remnant subject to him with heart's consent.  
And for that heart, that seeing I have left it him  
Long since I have not now in hand to give,  
This stone instead I send him, painted black  
And sown with tears and bones, a sepulchre  
Whereto my heart is likened, being as it  
Carved like a tomb or certain receptacle  
To harbour his commandments in, and hold  
More fast than all his memory and his name  
Therein enclosed as in the ring my hair,  
To come forth never till the grant of death  
Shall let him rear a trophy of my bones,  
As is the ring full of them, set therein  
For sign he has made full conquest of my heart,  
That even the bones must be to him bequeathed  
For memory of his victory and my loss  
That was so sweet to me: tell him but this,  
And say that by the enamelling of black  
He shall discern her steadfastness who sends,  
And by the tears my fears innumerable  
Lest I displease him, and those tears I shed  
For his dear absence and for heart's disdain  
That I may not in outward shape be his

As with full strength and heart and spirit I am,  
And with good cause ; for were my merit more  
Than hers of all born ever for men's love  
Found worthiest and most perfect, and as much  
As I desire it might be in his eye,  
Well might I so rest ever, and shall strive  
Still to maintain me in his government  
As worthily as I may. Say, I beseech him  
That is mine only good, in as good part  
To take it at my hand as I at his  
With extreme joy received our marriage bond,  
That till the marriage of our bodies be  
Made publicly shall part not from my breast,  
Which keeps it now in sign of all the bliss  
I can or hope for or desire on earth :  
And that my letter here brake off for dread  
Lest this as much should weary him to read  
As I took joy to write it ; therefore, say,  
Here did I set a kiss as on his hand  
With such devotion as I pray to God  
To give him long and blessed life, and me  
That only good of all which I desire  
And only may pretend to in the world,  
His love and his good favour who doth hold  
Alone my life up ; and this trust I showed  
To you in whom I know the trust he hath  
As I shall for his sake whose wife I am,  
His humble and obedient lawful wife,  
To whom my heart and body are dedicate  
And shall in no wise unto death be changed  
Nor good nor evil make me go from it.  
So tell him, and despatch. *[Exit PARIS.*  
What said Lord Mar  
Touching the child's charge to you ?

MARY BEATON

But thus much ;

That he would never let it from his hand  
Save with assent of the three several states,  
And on condition there shall be proclaimed  
Some honest lord and worthy such a charge  
As captain of the castle of Edinburgh,  
Where only may the prince, he says, lie safe  
From them that slew his father.

QUEEN

Ay, so brave ?

There speaks a man of trust, found honourable ;  
I had as lief be dead as see such men  
Stand so at point to thwart me : by my life,  
I hold it not a straw's worth in the scale  
If I must live so shackled. What, and now,  
When my life trembles on the top of fate,  
And all my days hang from this edge of time  
'Twixt night and light suspended, whence one hour  
May hurl all hopes down breathless to the pit  
And cast me broken at the mountain's foot  
Or set me sure and steadfast in the sun,  
To be so crossed of cozening honesties,  
And honours made of craft, and fraudulent faith,  
Would spur a blood more sluggish than my sleep  
And prick a drowsier passion. Well, let be ;  
Our time will come to take all these in hand.  
What may doubt deem then I would do with him  
That am his mother ? Nay, I know their thought ;  
It is their fear and hatred of my lord  
That glares askant on me ; and the child's self,  
I think, as little loves me as he need,

Knowing in what love I held his father. Come,  
I will yet see, before I take my leave,  
If there be such a nature in our blood  
As can command and change the spiritual springs  
And motions of our thought, advance or check  
The pulse of purpose in the soul that moves  
Our longings and our loathings to their end  
By mere control and force unreasonable  
Of motiveless compulsion ; if such blind  
And sensual chances of the stirring veins  
That feed the heart of child or mother may  
Divert and dull the mind's design, or turn  
The conscience and the current of the will  
From its full course and action. I believe,  
Albeit I would not hurt the life I bare  
Nor shed its blood, it is not possible  
Such love should live between my child and me  
Who know what source he came of more than mine,  
And how that part of me once mixed therewith  
Was sullied thence and shamed in mine own sight,  
That loathes to look upon it, yet must see  
In flesh and blood the record writ and sealed  
As oft as I behold him : and you saw  
He would not lie within mine arm, nor kiss,  
But like a fox-cub scratched and strove, to be  
Free of my hands again.

MARY BEATON

I see no need  
In heaven or earth why you should love him.

QUEEN

No ?

They say such law there is to enforce such love

On either part ; I know not : but I think  
Love should but flower from seed of love, and this  
Was but a tare sown timeless and in hate ;  
Yet so much am I mother in my mind  
That, be it for love or loathing, from my heart,  
When I perforce commend him to that care  
Which will not yield him naturally to mine,  
Fain would I parting know if soon or late  
Mine eyes shall turn upon that face again  
Which out of me was moulded, and take note,  
When each on each looks equal-eyed, and sees  
His crown a shadow that makes mine a shade,  
What king must this be and what queen shall I.

SCENE VIII. *Dunbar. A Room in the Castle*

MAITLAND *and* SIR JAMES MELVILLE

MELVILLE

What, have you seen them since we came from horse ?  
How looks she now ?

MAITLAND

Disquieted and strange ;  
And he so hot and high of mood, I think  
We have no safeguard from him but in her ;  
And Huntley that at Stirling spake with me  
Of this their counsel, and must now suspect  
It was by me discovered to the lords,  
Will turn perforce his fear of Bothwell's wrath  
Into a sword to strike as straight as he  
Even at my life, it may be ; which her grace

Shall easilier from fear of them redeem  
Than her own fame from evidence of men,  
That seeing her prisoner see too if she came  
By force or no, and led by heart or hand,  
To bonds indeed or freedom.

MELVILLE

Nay, myself

Was warned of him that rode in charge of me,  
The Laird here of Blackadder, how his lord  
Was of our lady's counsel ; and but now  
As they rode in I heard him swear, and laugh,  
Who would soe'er or would not, in their spite,  
Yea, though herself she would not with her will,  
Yet should the queen perforce now wed with him.

MAITLAND

The deed has flushed his brain and blood like wine ;  
He is wroth and merry at once, as a man mad.  
There will no good come of it.

MELVILLE

Surely, sir,

Of such loose crafts there cannot : all this land  
Will cry more loud upon her than on him  
If she be known consenting.

MAITLAND

If she be !

How shall not all ears know it on earth that hear ?  
But two miles out of Edinburgh at noon,

Accompanied of all her guard and us,  
She, meeting in mid road at Almond Bridge  
The unthought-on Bothwell at his horsetroop's head,  
Who with twelve men lays hand upon her rein,  
Yields herself to him for fear our blood be spilt,  
Or theirs or ours, for tenderness of heart  
Submits her to his violent masterdom,  
Forbids our swords, ties up all hands with words,  
And doglike follows hither at his hand  
For pure surprise and suddenness of fear  
That plucks the heart out of resistance ; then,  
Riding beneath the south wall of the town,  
On show of summons to the castle sent  
For help of us enforced thus of our foes,  
We get but fire of guns charged full of sound  
With hay stuffed in for powder ; and God knows  
Balfour knew naught of this, the governor,  
Who was forewarned not first of their design,  
How by no means to cross but further it  
With forecast of his office ; nay, all this  
Was undevised and on the sudden wrought  
To take her by swift stroke of simple hand ;  
And so astonied were we all, and so  
The castellan, and most of all the queen.  
Why, though the world be drunk with faith in lies  
Shall God make this too gospel ? From this day  
Shall she begin her ruin ; with rent heart  
I see the ways wherethrough her life shall lie,  
And to what end ; for never henceforth more  
Shall she get good or comfort of men's love,  
Nor power nor honour that a queen should have,  
Nor hap nor hope renewed in all her days.  
She has killed herself to take her kingdom off  
And give into strange keeping.



*Enter the QUEEN, BOTHWELL, and HUNTLEY*

BOTHWELL

Here he stands ;  
This was the knave that was to baffle me ;  
He shall die here.

HUNTLEY

I will not lose the part  
My sword should have in him : this hour and hand  
Shall cut off craft and danger. Stand, and die.

MAITLAND

Is it the queen's will that pursues my life ?  
Then let it strike, and end.

QUEEN

I charge you, hold ;  
I will not foully twice be forced of men  
To stand and stain mine eyes with sight of blood  
Shed of a friend, and guiltless. Hold, I say.

BOTHWELL

Stand by, for I will slay him.

QUEEN

Slay me then,  
For I will fling my body on their points  
Before your swords shall find him ; hark you, sir,  
[To HUNTLEY.

Whose father died my traitor in my sight,  
If one hair perish of my servant's head,  
You that had back your lands and goods but now  
Again shall lose them with your forfeit life  
For boot of this man's blood.

BOTHWELL

Woman, give way.

QUEEN

Give all your swords way toward me ; let me bleed  
Ere this my friend that has been true to me :  
I swear he shall not.

MAITLAND

Madam, for God's love,  
Come you not in their peril ; I am armed,  
If both not run upon me.

BOTHWELL

Fool, I say,  
Give place, or I shall know not what I do ;  
Make me not mad.

QUEEN

I cannot fear you yet.  
Will you strike now ?

BOTHWELL

I should but do you right.  
Why thrust you in between me and this man  
Whom your heart knows for traitor, and whose  
tongue

Crossed and betrayed our counsel to the lords?  
Had he his will, we should not stand to-day  
Here heart to heart, but you in ward of them,  
And I divided from you.

QUEEN

My sweet lord,  
Let not your wrath confound my happiness ;  
Stain not my fair and fortunate hour with blood  
Shed of a good man who shall serve us yet.  
It shall more help to have him live our friend  
Than fiftyfold slain of our enemies.

BOTHWELL

Have your will's way : he cannot cross us now ;  
I care not if he live.

MAITLAND

I am bounden to you  
For so much grace.

QUEEN

Vex not his mood again.  
To-morrow shall all friends be reconciled ;  
To-night rest here in surety.

BOTHWELL

Be it so.      [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IX. *The same*

*The QUEEN, BOTHWELL, and the ARCHBISHOP of  
ST. ANDREW'S*

## QUEEN

What counsel, father ? if their league be made  
So soon and strong at Stirling, we had need  
Surely by this be fast in Edinburgh ;  
We have sent thither freely as our friends  
Lord Huntley and James Melville, who were here  
As in our ward, not prisoners ; every day  
Here lingering makes our enemies bitterer-tongued  
And our strange state more hazardous ; myself  
More taxed for willing bondage, or my lord  
For violence done upon me.

## ARCHBISHOP

In my mind,  
There is no mean of policy now but speed  
Nor surety but short counsel and stout heart.  
The lords at Stirling, while you put off time,  
Athol and Mar, and Morton with Argyle,  
Are sworn to crown the prince, and of his name  
Make to their cause a standard, if you cleave  
Still to my lord here, from whose violent hand  
With your own leave they fain would pluck you forth  
And keep your honour hurtless ; but they see  
You will have no deliverance at their hands  
From him who, as they say, doth boast himself.  
If he may get your child once in his ward,  
To warrant him for ever in good time

From all revenging of his father's death.  
Nay, it is bruited of them all about  
How you at parting would have given the boy  
An apple poisoned, which he put away,  
And dogs that ate it after swelled and died.

## BOTHWELL

The devil is in their lips ; had I free way,  
Fire should seal up and sear them.

## ARCHBISHOP

So they talk ;

The very children's tongues are hot on you,  
And in their plays your shadowy action staged  
And phantoms raised of your presented deed ;  
Boys that in Stirling streets had made their game  
To act again the slaying of Darnley, so  
Were rapt with passion of the pastime feigned  
They wellnigh slew the player that took on him  
Your part, my lord, as murderer, and came off  
Half hanged indeed and breathless ; this I hear,  
And more much weightier daily from that part  
Pointing the same way on you ; sure it is,  
From France and England messengers desire  
To have the prince delivered to their charge  
As to be fostered for his surety's sake  
Of one or other, safelier so bestowed  
In foreign harbourage of a stranger court  
Than at the rough breast of his natural land ;  
Such offer comes there of Elizabeth  
To those unquiet lords, but other aid  
They must of her not look for to their part

Who stand against their sovereign. Now, since these  
Are dangers evident, and every day  
Puts more in them of dangerous, best it were,  
I think, to meet them warlike point to point,  
Your hands and powers made one, and multiplied  
By mutual force and faith ; or you must part  
And each lose other, and yet be neither saved,  
Or presently with one sole face confront  
The many-mouthed new menace of the time,  
With divers heads deformed of enmities  
That roar and ravin in the night of state  
Made dim with factions ; only majesty  
With light of bared and kindled brows and eyes  
Can face them to consume ; do you but show  
Your soul as high as is your crown, and power  
As plain as is your cause, you shall enforce  
By resolution and a forthright will  
The obedience and the allowance of these men  
That would constrain you by the fear of them  
Within the limit of their leave. I say,  
Proclaim at once the fore-ordained divorce  
Between his sometime lady and my lord  
And hard thereon your marriage, as compelled  
By perilous instance of necessity  
At once to assure you of a husband's help  
And present strength in this your need, who stand  
Fenceless and forceless with no man for stay,  
And could desire none truer and worthier trust  
Than him whose service done and valiant name  
May warrant your remission of such fault  
As men lay on him for the seeming force  
With which unwillingly he stood constrained  
To save you even for love's sake from their hands  
Whence had not he redeemed you as by might

They had done you worse wrong than he seemed  
to do.

This shall excuse the speed that you put on  
And leave their hands no time to rise that would  
Prevent you, being unmarried ; and your own,  
Forestalling them, shall take again and steer  
The helm of this land's general weal, else left  
To their cross guidance and false pilotage.

BOTHWELL

By God, well said and counselled.

QUEEN

All is well,  
Or shall, if but one thing be ; and in you  
That lies alone of all men. Nay, you know it ;  
Wrong me not now to ask.

BOTHWELL

Wrong you not me,  
To cross my wit with riddles, which you know  
From no man's lips I love.

QUEEN

I know not yet  
If there be nought on any lips that live  
Save mine that you love better : I can tell  
Too little of your likings.

BOTHWELL

Be not wroth  
That thus much of them I desire you learn,

And set your heart to it, once being schooled—fair  
queen,

These are no chambering times, nor sit we here  
To sing love's catches counter-changed with words  
That cross and break in kisses : what you will,  
Be swift to speak, or silent.

## QUEEN

What I will?

I will be sure there hangs about your heart  
No thought that bound it once to one cut off  
And yet may feed it with desire to share  
What is my treasure and my right to have  
With her most undeserving ; which in you  
Were more than Jason's falsehood was, that gave  
To his new wife such vantage of his old  
As you give her of me, whose narrower heart  
Holds not a third part of the faith and love  
That my obedience bears you, though she wear  
Against my will such vantage in your sight,  
By my hard hap ; yet would I think not so,  
Nor liken you to such a trustless man  
And miserable as he was, nor myself  
To one so wronged a woman, and being wronged  
In suffering so unpitiful as she.  
Yet you put in me somewhat of her kind  
That makes me like unto her in anything  
That touches you or may preserve you mine  
To whom alone you appertain, if that  
May be called mine by right appropriated  
Which should be won through faithful travail, yea,  
Through only loving of you as God knows  
I do and shall do all my days of life



For pain or evil that can come thereof :  
In recompense of which and all those ills  
You have been cause of to me, and must think  
That I esteem no evils for your sake,  
Let not this woman with her heartless tears  
Nor piteous passion thrust me out of door  
Who should sit sole and secret in your heart.  
What hath she borne or I not borne for you,  
And would not bear again? or by what gift  
Have I set store or spared it that might go  
To buy your heart's love to me? have I found  
Empire or love of friends or pride or peace  
Or honour or safe life or innocence  
Too good things to put from me, or men's wrath,  
Terror or shame or hatred of mine own,  
Or breach of friends, or kingdom's wreck, or sin,  
Too fearful things to embrace and make them mine  
With as good will and joyous height of heart  
As hers who takes love in her prosperous arms  
And has delight to bridegroom? Have I not  
Loved all these for your sake, and those good things,  
Have I not all abhorred them? Would I keep  
One comfort or one harbour or one hope,  
One ransom, one resource, one resting-place,  
That might divide me from your danger, save  
This head whose crown is humbled at your foot  
From storm that smote on yours? Would I sleep  
warm

Out of the wind's way when your sail was set  
By night against the sea-breach? Would I wait  
As might your wife to hear of you, how went  
The day that saw your battle, and hold off  
Till the cry came of fallen or conquering men  
To bid me mourn or triumph? Hath my heart

Place for one good thought bred not of your good  
Or ill thought not depending on your ill?  
What hath she done that yours hath place for her  
Or time or thought or pity?

## BOTHWELL

What have I,  
That yours should fix on her untimely? Nay,  
Last year she was my wife and moved you not,  
And now she is turned forth naked of that name  
And stripped as 'twere to clothe you, comes this heat,  
And fear takes fire lest she turn back or I  
To thrust you forth instead: you are fair and fool  
Beyond all queens and women.

## QUEEN

There spake truth,  
For then you said, most loving. But indeed  
This irks me yet, this galls with doubt and fear,  
That even her plea to be divorced from you  
On some forepast adulterous charge, which proved  
She wins her asking, leaves your hand not loose  
By law to wed again, but your same deed  
Frees her from you and fetters you from me;  
Then stand we shamed and profitless; meseems  
God's very hand can loose not us and join,  
Who binds and looses; though Buccleuch make oath  
She was contracted to you first, and this  
No righteous marriage; though she plight her soul  
As she made proffer for our hope's sake; yea,  
Though you should bring a hundred loves to swear  
They had the firstlings of your faith, who kept  
No faith with any, nor will keep with me,

God knows, and I, that have no warrant yet  
In my lord's word here which unweds you, being  
Matched with your cousin in the fourth degree,  
And no proof published if the Church's grace  
Were granted for it, or sought ; no help of this,  
If your love give not warrant ; and therein  
If she hath half or I have less than all,  
Then have I nothing of you. Speak to him ;  
Bid him not break his faith, not this now mine ;  
Plead for me with him, father, lest he lie  
And I too lose him ; God shall pardon, say,  
What sin we do for love, or what for wrath,  
Or to defend us from the danger of men,  
But to me, me, say, if he be forsworn,  
That God shall not forgive it him nor I.

## ARCHBISHOP

Be not too careful to confound yourself ;  
These bonds are broken by God's leave and law ;  
Make no fresh bonds of your own fears, to do  
What harm these do no more ; he hath put her off :  
Rest there content.

## QUEEN

Nay, why should I then trust  
He shall not put off me in heart for her ?

## BOTHWELL

Why, have your choice then, and mistrust ; God's  
death !  
I had deemed I had learnt of women's witlessness  
Some little learning, yet I thought no more  
Than that it was but light as air, snow, foam,

And all things light, not lighter. I would know  
What men hold foolish yet that hold you wise,  
If not your fear.

QUEEN

Doth she not love you ?

BOTHWELL

Ay.

QUEEN

Hath she not cause to hate, and doth not hate,  
Who sues to be put from you, for your fault  
Craves leave to be cut off, as I crave leave  
To take you from her hands, her gift ?

BOTHWELL

God knows ;

She may love, hate, or hate not neither love,  
Or both alike ; I know not.

QUEEN

But I know

That you can love not. Nay, then help me, God !  
If I did know this I would kill myself.  
Yet to more proof I would I had put your heart  
Ere I gave up to it all the might of mine—  
Which is but feebleness. Well, we will go ;  
There is no better counsel. Pardon me  
If my fear seem to wrangle with my faith ;  
They are parts but of my love, that with itself  
Strives to be master of its grief and joy  
Lest either overbear it, and therewith  
Put out my life. Come ; all things shall be well.

SCENE X. *Holyrood*

*Enter HERRIES and SIR JAMES MELVILLE*

HERRIES

Is the work done?

MELVILLE

They are wedded fast ; and now  
I think would one of them to free herself  
Give the right hand she hath given him.

HERRIES

What, so soon?

Came she as loth into the council-hall  
Or were her answers as compelled and strange?

MELVILLE

I have not seen for any chance till now  
So changed a woman in the face as she,  
Saving with extreme sickness. She was wed  
In her old mourning habits, and her face  
As deadly as were they ; the soft warm joy  
That laughed in its fair feature, and put heart  
In the eyes and gracious lips as to salute  
All others' eyes with sweet regardfulness,  
Looked as when winds have worn the white-rose  
leaf ;  
No fire between her eyelids, and no flower  
In the April of her cheeks ; their spring acold,  
And but for want of very heart to weep  
They had been rainier than they were forlorn.

## HERRIES

And his new grace of Orkney?

## MELVILLE

The good duke  
Was dumb while Adam Bothwell with grave lips  
Set forth the scandal of his lewd life past  
And fair faith of his present penitence,  
Whose days to come being higher than his past place  
Should expiate those gone by, and their good works  
Atone those evil ; hardly twitched his eye  
Or twinkled half his thick lip's curve of hair,  
Listening ; but when the bishop made indeed  
His large hard hand with hers so flowerlike fast,  
He seemed as 'twere for pride and mighty heart  
To swell and shine with passion, and his eye  
To take into the fire of its red look  
All dangers and all adverse things that might  
Rise out of days unrisen, to burn them up  
With its great heat of triumph ; and the hand  
Fastening on hers so griped it that her lips  
Trembled, and turned to catch the smile from his,  
As though her spirit had put its own life off  
And sense of joy or property of pain  
To close with his alone ; but this twin smile  
Was briefer than a flash or gust that strikes  
And is not ; for the next word was not said  
Ere her face waned again to winter-ward  
As a moon smitten, and her answer came  
As words from dead men wickedly wrung forth  
By craft of wizards, forged and forceful breath  
Which hangs on lips that loath it.

## HERRIES

Will you think

This was not haply but for show, to wear  
The likeness as of one not all constrained  
Nor all consenting, willingly enforced  
To do her will as of necessity?  
That she might seem no part yet of his plot,  
But as compelled by counsel of those lords  
Who since her coming have subscribed by name  
The paper of advice that in his cause  
Declares what force of friends has Bothwell here  
In Lothian and on all the border's march  
To keep good order, and how well it were  
She should for surety wed him whom she needs  
Must wed for honour or perforce live shamed  
By violence done upon her.

## MELVILLE

No ; there hung

Too much of fear and passion on her face  
To be put off when time shall be to unmask ;  
The fire that moved her and the mounting will  
While danger was and battle was to be,  
Now she hath leapt into the pit alive  
To win and wear the diamond, are no more ;  
Hope feels the wounds upon its hands and feet  
That clomb and clung, now halting since the hour  
That should have crowned has bruised it. No, 'tis  
truth ;  
She is heart-struck now, and labours with herself,  
As one that loves and trusts not but the man  
Who makes so little of men's hate may make  
Of women's love as little ; with this doubt

New-born within her, fears that slept awake,  
And shame's eyes open that were shut for love,  
To see on earth all pity hurt to death  
By her own hand, and no man's face her friend  
If his be none for whom she casts them off  
And finds no strength against him in their hands.

## HERRIES

Small strength indeed or help of craft or force  
Must she now look for of them ; and shall find,  
I fear, no stay against men's spirits and tongues  
Nor shelter in the observance of their will  
That she puts on, submitting her own faith  
To the outward face of theirs, as in this act  
Of marriage, and the judgment now enforced  
Against the allowance of the mass, albeit  
With a bruised heart and loathing did she bow  
That royal head and hand imperious once  
To give so much of her soul's trust away ;  
And little shall it stead her.

## MELVILLE

So fear I ;  
'Tis not the warrant of an act affirmed  
Against the remnants of her faith, nor form  
Of this strange wedlock, shall renew to her  
Men's outworn love and service ; nay, and strife  
Lies closer to her than fears from outward ; these  
Whose swords and souls attend on her new lord,  
Both now for fault of pay grown mutinous,  
From flat revolt they hardly have redeemed



With the queen's jewels and that English gift  
Of the gold font sent hither for the prince  
That served him not for christening, melted now  
To feed base hands with gold and stop loud throats,  
Whose strength alone and clamour put such heart  
In Bothwell that he swore to hang the man  
Who would not speak their banns at first, and now  
But utters them with lips that yet protest  
Of innocent blood and of adulterous bonds  
By force proclaimed, and fraudulent ; and this Craig  
The townsmen love, and heed not that for craft  
Each day will Bothwell hear men preach, and show  
To them that speak all favour, and will sit  
A guest at burghers' boards unsummoned ; yet  
Men's hate more swells against him, to behold  
How by the queen he rides unbonneted  
And she rebukes his too much courtesy ;  
So that their world within doors and without  
Swells round them doubtfully toward storm, and sees  
This hot-brained helmsman in his own conceit  
Even here in port, who drifts indeed at sea.

## HERRIES

Short time will wind this up : the secretary,  
Whose blood the queen would see not shed of him,  
Is slipped away for Stirling, there to join  
With Lindsay and the lords ere this combined,  
From whom I may not now divide myself,  
On the child's party. Not a hand will stay  
Nor heart upon this side ; the Hamiltons,  
For their own ends that set this marriage on,  
Will for those ends with no sad hearts behold  
At others' hands her imminent overthrow.

MELVILLE

This was the archbishop's counsel, that annulled  
Last year's true marriage to procure the queen's  
And even therein betray her. God mend all !  
But I misdoubt me lest the sun be set  
That looked upon the last of her good days.

SCENE XI. *The same*

*The QUEEN and BOTHWELL ; MARY BEATON and  
ARTHUR ERSKINE in attendance*

QUEEN

Are you yet wroth ?

BOTHWELL

Are you yet wise ? to know  
If I be wroth should less import than this  
Which I would fain find of you.

QUEEN

By my life,  
I think I am but wise enough to know  
That witless I was ever.

BOTHWELL

Ay, but most,  
You mean, to wed me, that am graceless more  
Than witless you that wedded, in men's eyes  
Who justliest judge of either ; yet, by God,  
Had I not grace enough to match with you,

I must have less than in their minds I have  
And tongues of them that curse me ; but what grief  
Wrings now your heart or whets your tongue, that  
strikes  
When the heart stirs not ?

QUEEN

Nay, no grief it is  
To be cut off from all men's company,  
Watched like a thief lest he break ward by night,  
My chamber door set round with men-at-arms,  
My steps and looks espied on, hands and feet  
Fettered as 'twere with glances of strange eyes  
That guard me lest I stray ; my ways, my words,  
My very sleep their subject.

BOTHWELL

You were wont  
To walk more free ; I wot you have seen fair days  
When you lived large i' the sun, and had sweet tongues  
To sing with yours, and haply lips and eyes  
To make song sweeter than the lute may ; now  
'Tis hard that you sit here my woeful wife,  
Who use you thus despitefully, that yet  
Was never queen so mated with a groom  
And so mishandled ; have you said so ?

QUEEN

I ?

BOTHWELL

Who hath put these words else in men's mouths, that  
prate  
How you lie fast in prison ? I did know

A woman's tongue keen as her faith was light,  
But faith so like the wind spake never yet  
With tongue so like a sword's point.

QUEEN

No, my lord?

'Tis well that I should hear so first of you  
Who best may know the truth of your worst word.

BOTHWELL

Is it no truth that men so speak, and you,  
By speech or silence or by change of face,  
By piteous eyes or angry, give them cause  
To babble of your bonds? What grace you show  
Toward others is as doubt and hate of me  
In these our enemies' sight, who see it and swear  
You are kept in ward here of my will, and made,  
Out of no trust or love but force and fear,  
Thrall to my hand. Why, being but two days wed,  
Must there be cause between us of dispute  
For such a thing as this man, in whose name  
I am crossed and slighted of your wanton will?

QUEEN

If he be worth no more than you conceive,  
What grace I do him can hurt you?

BOTHWELL

I conceive!

Why, what worth is he with you, that I should  
Conceive the least thought of him? Were I hurt,  
Assure yourself it would be to his death;  
Lay that much to your heart.

QUEEN

My heart is killed.

I have not where to lay it.

BOTHWELL

Pray you, no tears ;  
I have seen you weep when dead men were alive  
That for your eye-drops wept their hearts' blood out ;  
So will not I. You have done me foolish wrong  
And haply cast your fame for food to hounds  
Whose teeth will strip it hour by hour more bare  
Whereon they have gnawed before.

QUEEN

What have I done ?

Speak.

BOTHWELL

Nay, I will, because you know not : hark,  
You are even too simple and harmless ; being man's  
wife,  
Not now the first time, you should buy more wit  
Though with less innocence ; you have given a gift,  
Out of your maiden singleness of soul  
And eye most witless of misconstruing eyes,  
Where you should not : this is strange truth to you,  
But truth, God help us ! that man's horse who was  
Your husband, and whose chattels, place, and name  
Lie in my hold I think now lawfully  
Whence none is like to wring them, have you given  
Out of my hand to one of whom fame saith  
That by the witness of a northland witch

He when I die must wed you, and my life  
Shall last not half a year ; for in your bed  
Must lie two husbands after me, and you  
Shall in your fifth lord's lifetime die by fire.  
Now, being but third and least in worth of these,  
I would not have you die so red a death,  
But keep you from all fresh or fiercer heat  
Than of my lips and arms ; for which things' sake  
I am not blithe, so please you, to behold  
How straight this lay lord abbot of Arbroath  
Sits in your husband's saddle. Pardon me  
That with my jealous knowledge I confound  
Your virginal sweet ignorance of men's minds,  
Ill thoughts and tongues unmannerly, that strike  
At the pure heart which dreams not on such harm ;  
It is my love and care of your life's peace  
Makes me thus venturous to wage words with you,  
And put such troublous things in your fair mind,  
Whereof God wot you knew not : and to end,  
Take this much of me ; live what life you may  
Or die what death, while I have part in you,  
None shall have part with me ; nor touch nor word  
Nor eye nor hand nor writing nor one thought  
The lightest that may hang upon a look  
Shall man get of you that I know not of  
And answer not upon him. Be you sure  
I am not of such fool's mould cast in flesh  
As royal-blooded husbands ; being no king  
Nor kin of kings, but one that keep unarmed  
My head but with my hand, and have no wit  
To twitch you strings and match you rhyme for rhyme  
And turn and twitter on a tripping tongue,  
But so much wit to make my word and sword  
Keep time and rhyme together, say and slay.

Set this down in such record as you list,  
But keep it surer than you keep your mind  
If that be changing : for by heaven and hell  
I swear to keep the word I give you fast  
As faith can hold it, that who thwarts me here  
Or comes across my will's way in my wife's,  
Dies as a dog dies, doomless. Now, your pleasure ;  
I prate no more.

QUEEN

Shall I be handled thus ?

BOTHWELL

You have too much been handled otherwise ;  
Now will I keep you from men's hands in mine,  
Or lack the use of these.

QUEEN

What, to strike me ?  
You shall not need ; give me a knife to strike  
That I may let my life out in his eye,  
Or I will drown myself.

BOTHWELL

Why, choose again ;  
I cross you not.

QUEEN

Give me a knife, I say.

## ARTHUR ERSKINE

Make not our hearts bleed, madam, as they burn  
To hear what we hear silent.

## BOTHWELL

Comfort her ;  
You were her chamber-knight on David's day.

## ARTHUR ERSKINE

My lord, the reverence that the queen's sight bears  
And awe toward her make me thus slow to set  
My hand to do what work my heart bids ; else  
I would not doubt to stand before your grace  
And make such answer as her servant may.

## QUEEN

Forbear him, Arthur ; nay, and me ; 'tis I  
On whom all strokes first fall and sorest smite,  
Who most of all am shieldless, without stay,  
And look for no man's comfort. Pray you, sir,  
If it be in your will that I cast off  
This heavy life to lighten your life's load  
That now with mine is laden, let me die  
More queenlike than this dog's death you denounce  
Against the man that falls into your hate :  
Though not for love, yet shame, because I was  
A queen that loved you : else you should not seem  
So royal in her sight whose eyes you serve,  
Nor she when I am dead with such high heart  
Behold you, nor with such glad lips commend  
As conqueror of me slain for her love's sake



And servant of her living in your love.

Let me die therefore queenlike, and your sword  
Strike where your tongue hath struck ; though not so  
deep,

It shall suffice to cleave my heart and end.

## BOTHWELL

Hear you, my queen ; if we twain be one flesh,  
I will not have this daintier part of it  
Turn any timeless hand against itself  
To hurt me, nor this fire which is your tongue  
Shoot any flame on me ; no fuel am I  
To burn and feed you ; not a spark you shed  
Shall kindle me to ruin, but with my foot  
Rather will I tread out the light that was  
A firebrand for the death of many a man  
To light the pile whereon they burnt alive.  
What, have I taken it in my hand to scorch  
And not to light me ? or hath it set fire  
To so few lives already that who bears  
Needs not to watch it warily and wake  
When the night falls about him ? Nay, the man  
Were twice the fool that these your dead men were,  
Who seeing as I have seen and in his hand  
Holding the fire I carry through the dark  
To be the beacon of my travelling days  
And shine upon them ended, should not walk  
With feet and eyes both heedful at what hour  
By what light's leading on what ground he goes,  
And toward what end : be therefore you content  
To keep your flame's heat for your enemies' bale,  
And for your friend that large and liberal light  
That gave itself too freely, shot too far,

Till it was closed as in a lantern up  
To make my path plain to me ; which once lost,  
The light goes out for ever.

QUEEN

Yea, I know ;  
My life can be but light now to your life,  
And of no service else ; or if none there,  
Even as you say, must needs be quenched ; and would  
The wind that now beats on it and the sea  
Had quenched it ere your breath, and I gone out  
With no man's blood behind me.

BOTHWELL

Come, be wise ;  
Our sun is not yet sunken.

QUEEN

No, not yet ;  
The sky must even wax redder than it is  
When that shall sink ; darkness and smoke of hell,  
Clouds that rain blood, and blast of winds that wreck,  
Shall be about it setting.

BOTHWELL

What, your heart  
Fails you now first that shrank not when a man's  
Might well at need have failed him ?

QUEEN

Ay, and no ;  
It is the heart that fired me fails my heart,

And as that bows beneath it so doth mine  
Bend, and will break so surely.

BOTHWELL

Nay, not mine ;  
There is not weight yet on our adverse part,  
Fear not, to bend it.

QUEEN

Yet it fails me now.  
I have leant too much my whole life's weight on it  
With all my soul's strength, and beneath the fraught  
I hear it split and sunder. Let me rest ;  
I would fain sleep a space now. Who goes there ?

MARY BEATON

A suitor to behold your majesty.

QUEEN

I will not see him. Who should make suit to me ?  
Who moves yet in this world so miserable  
That I can comfort ? or what hand so weak  
It should be now my suppliant, or uplift  
In prayer for help's sake to lay hold on mine ?  
What am I to give aid or alms, who have  
Nor alms nor aid at hand of them to whom  
I gave not some but all part of myself ?  
I will not see him.

MARY BEATON .

It is a woman.

QUEEN

Ay ?

But yet I think no queen ; and cannot be  
But therefore happier and more strong than I.  
Yet I will see what woman's face for grief  
Comes to seek help at mine ; if she be mad,  
Me may she teach to lose my wits and woes  
And live more enviable than ye that yet  
Have wit to know me wretched.

*Enter* JANE GORDON

Who is this ?

Are you my suitor ?

JANE GORDON

I am she that was  
Countess of Bothwell ; now my name again  
Is that my father gave me.

QUEEN

Ay, no more ;

You are daughter yet and sister to great earls,  
And bear that honour blameless ; be it enough ;  
And tell me wherefore by that name you come  
And with what suit before me.

JANE GORDON

Even but this,

To look once on you and to bid farewell  
Ere I fare forth from sight.

## QUEEN

Farewell ; and yet  
I know not who should in this world fare well.  
Is the word said?

## JANE GORDON

A little leave at last  
I pray you give me : that I seek it not  
For love or envy toward my sometime lord  
Or heart toward you disloyal now my queen,  
Let me not plead uncredited. I came  
Surely with no good hope to no glad end,  
But with no thought so vile of will as this,  
To thrust between your hearts the care of me,  
Claim right or challenge pity, melt or fret  
Your eyes with forced compassion : I did think  
To have kissed your hand and something said for  
sign

I had come not of weak heart or evil will,  
But in good faith, to see how strong in love  
They stand whose joy makes joyless all my life,  
Whose loving leaves it loveless, and their wealth  
Feeds full upon my famine. Be not wroth ;  
I speak not to rebuke you of my want  
Or of my loss reprove you, that you take  
My crown of love to gild your crown of gold ;  
I know what right you have, and take no shame  
To sit for your sake humbled, who being born  
A poor mean woman would not less have been  
By God's grace royal, and by visible seal  
A natural queen of women ; but being crowned  
You make the throne imperial, and your hand  
Puts power into the sceptre ; yea, this head  
Of its gold circlet takes not majesty,

But gives it of its own ; this may men see,  
And I deny not ; nor is this but just,  
That I, who have no such honour born or given,  
Should have not either, if it please you not,  
That which I thought I had ; the name I wore,  
The hand scarce yet a year since laid in mine,  
The eye that burned on mine as on a wife's,  
The lip that swore me faith, the heart that held  
No thought or throb wherein I had no part,  
Or heaved but with a traitor's breath, and beat  
With pulse but of a liar.

BOTHWELL

Ay, swore I so?

Why, this was truth last year then.

QUEEN

Truth, my lord?

What does the fire of such a word as this  
Between such lips but burn them, as mine ears  
Burn that must hear by your device and hers  
With what strange flatteries on her prompted lips  
This dame unwedded lifts her hand unringed  
To abash me with its show of faith, and make  
Your wife ashamed at sight of such a love  
As yet she bears you that is not your wife?

BOTHWELL

What devil should prick me to such empty proof  
And pride unprofitable? I pray you think  
I am no such boy to boast of such a spoil  
As chamberers make their brag of. Let her speak  
And part not as unfriends.

## QUEEN

Madam, and you  
That thus renumber and resound his vows,  
To what good end I know not, in our ear,  
What would you have of him whom your own will  
Rose up to plead against as false, to break  
His bonds that irked you and unspeak the word  
That held you hand in hand? Did you not pray  
To be set free from bondage, and now turn  
To question with the hand that you put off  
If it did well to loose you?

## JANE GORDON

Truly no ;  
Nor will I question with your grace in this,  
Whether by mine own will and uncompelled  
I only would have put that hand away  
That I will say would yet have held mine fast  
But for my frowardness and rancorous mind ;  
Let all this even be so ; as he shall say  
Who will say nought but with your queenly will,  
Why, so will I. Yet ere I am gone, my lord—  
O, not my lord, but hers whose thrall am I—  
My sometime friend and yet not enemy,  
If this thing not offend you, that I crave  
So much breath of you as may do me right,  
I pray you witness for me how far forth  
And for what love's sake I took part with you  
Or gave consent to our devised divorce,  
And if this were for hate ; for you should know  
How much of old time I have hated you,  
How bitter made my heart, what jealous edge

Set on mine envy toward you ; spare not then  
To say if out of cold or cankered heart  
I sought, or yielded shamefully for spite,  
To be divided from you. Nay, forbear ;  
Speak not, nor frown on me ; you cannot say  
I was your loveless or disloyal wife,  
Or in my void bed on disconsolate nights  
Sought comfort but of tears : nor that I held  
Mine honour hurt of that which bruised my heart,  
And grudged to help you to mine own most wrong  
And lend you mine own hand to smite myself  
And make you by mine own mouth quit of me.  
This that I did, and wherefore I did this,  
And if for love's or hate's sake, verily  
You shall not say you know not, and the queen  
Shall blame me not to put you yet in mind,  
Nor think it much that I make record here  
Of this that was between us : wherefore now  
I take no shame at this my leave-taking  
To part as one that has not erred herein,  
To love too little ; this shall not be said  
When one bethinks him such a woman was,  
That with poor spirit or with contracted heart  
I gave myself to love you, or was found  
Too mean of mind or sparing of my soul  
To cast for love the crown of love away,  
And when you bade refuse you for my lord,  
Whom, had you bidden, with my whole heart's blood  
I had thought not much to purchase for my love :  
But seeing nor blood nor all my body's tears  
Might buy you back to love me, I was fain  
That you should take them and my very life  
To buy new love and life with. Sir, and now  
Ere we twain part——



QUEEN

What, are ye parted not?  
Between his lover and my lord I stand  
And see them weep and wrangle ere they part,  
And hold my peace for pity!

JANE GORDON

God shall judge  
If with pure heart and patience, or with soul  
That burns and pines, I would have said farewell;  
I crave but this much of your grace and God's,  
Make me at last not angry.

QUEEN

Have you held  
No counsel or communion with my lord  
Since—I am shamed that take upon my lips  
Such inquisition. If you have aught yet, speak;  
I bid not nor forbid you.

JANE GORDON

Nought but this;  
To unpledge my faith, unlight my love, and so  
Set on his hand the seal by touch of mine  
That sunders us.

QUEEN

You shall not take his hand.

JANE GORDON

I think not ever then to touch it more,  
Nor now desire, who have seen with eyes more sad  
More than I thought with sorrowing eyes to see  
When I came hither ; so this long last time  
Farewell, my lord ; and you, his queen, farewell.

[Exit.]

QUEEN

Hath she made end ? *While I have part in you,  
None shall have part with me ;* was this my lord,  
Was this not you that said so ?

BOTHWELL

Come, enough ;

I am bound not to be baited of your tongues.

QUEEN

Bid her come back.

BOTHWELL

What, are you foolish ? think

You twain shall look in either's eyes no more.

QUEEN

Why should I look in yours to find her there ?  
For there she sits as in a mirror shown  
By the love's light enkindled from your heart,  
That flashed but on me like a fen-fire lit  
To lure me to my grave's edge, whence I fall  
Deep as the pit of hell ; but yet for shame  
Deny not her to me as me to her,

Me that have known this ever, but lacked heart  
To put the thing to use I knew ; and now  
For both our sakes who have loved you, play not  
false

But with one love at once ; take up your love  
And wear it as a garland in men's sight,  
For it becomes you ; if you love me not,  
You have lied by this enough ; speak truth, shake  
hands,  
Loose hearts and leave me.

## BOTHWELL

Vex not me too long,  
Vexing your own heart thus with vanity ;  
Take up your wisdom that you have at will,  
And wear it as a sword in danger's sight  
That now looks hard upon us. Mine you are,  
Love me or love not, trust me not or trust,  
As yours am I ; and even as I in you,  
Have faith in me, no less nor further ; then  
We shall have trust enough on either part  
To build a wall about us at whose foot  
That sea of iron swayed by winds of war  
Shall break in foam like blood ; and hurled once  
back,  
The hearts and swords of all our enemies fallen  
Lie where they fell for ever. Know but this,  
And care not what is unknown else ; we twain  
Have wrought not out this fortune that we have  
Nor made us way to such an hour and power  
To let men take and break it, while as fools  
We kiss and brawl and cry and kiss again,  
And wot not when they smite. For these next days,

We will behold the triumph held at Leith  
And pageant of a sea-fight as set forth  
With open face and spirit of joyousness  
To fix this faith in all men's eyes and minds,  
That while life lives we stand indissoluble :  
Then shall you send out for your child again  
Forth of Lord Mar's good keeping, that your heart  
May here have comfort in his present sight ;  
So shall all these who make his name their sword  
Lie weaponless within our hand and hold,  
Who are drawn in one against us, or prepare,  
While we delay, for Stirling ; where by this,  
I am certified on faith of trusty men,  
Argyle is met with Morton, our good friends  
That served us for their turn, with some that helped  
To make our match and some that would have  
    marred,

Once several-souled, now in their envies one,  
As Lindsay, Athol, Herries ; and to these  
Maitland is fled, your friend that must not bleed,  
Your counsellor is stolen away and lives  
To whet his wit against you ; but myself,  
When we have shown us to the people, and seen  
What eye they turn upon our marriage feast,  
Will ride to Melrose, and raise up from sleep  
Their hardy hearts whom now mine unfriends there  
Hold in subjection ; Herries nor Lord Hume  
Nor Maxwell shall have power to tie them up  
When I shall bid them forth, and all the march  
Shall rise beneath us as with swell o' the sea  
And wash of thickening waters when the wind  
Makes the sea's heart leap with such might of joy  
As hurls its waves together ; there shall we  
Ride on their backs as warriors, and our ship

Dance high toward harbour. Put but on the spirit  
You had in all times that beset your peace,  
Since you came home, with danger ; in those wars  
That made the first years clamorous of your reign,  
And in this past and perilous year of ours  
Where you lacked never heart. Be seen again  
The royal thing men saw you ; these your friends  
Shall look more friendly on our wedded faith  
Seeing no more discord of our days to be,  
And our bold borderers with one heart on fire  
Burn in your warlike safeguard, once to strike  
And end all enemies' quarrel. When we part,  
At Borthwick Castle shall you look for me,  
Where I will gather friends more fain of fight  
Than all our foes may muster.

## QUEEN

Sir, so be it ;

But now my heart is lower than once it was,  
And will not sit I think again so high  
Though my days turn more prosperous than I deem.  
But let that be. Come, friends, and look not sad  
Though I look sadder ; make what cheer we may,  
For festival or fight, or shine or shower,  
I will not fail you yet. God give me heart,  
That never so much lacked it ; yea, he shall,  
Or I will make it out of mine own fears  
And with my feebleness increase my force  
And build my hope the higher that joy lies low  
Till all be lost and won. Lead you, my lord,  
And fear not but I follow ; I have wept  
When I should laugh, and laughed when I should  
weep,

And now live humbler than I thought to be ;  
I ask not of your love, but of mine own  
I have yet left to give. Come, we will see  
These pageants or these enemies ; my heart  
Shall look alike on either. Be not wroth ;  
I will be merry while I live, and die  
When I have leave. My spirit is sick ; would God  
We were now met at Borthwick, with men's spears  
And noise of friends about us ; friend or foe,  
I care not whether ; here I am sore at heart,  
As one that cannot wholly wake nor sleep  
Till death receive or life reprieve me. Come ;  
We should be glad now ; let the world take note  
We are glad in spite and sight of enmities  
That are but worth the hour they take to quell.

SCENE XII. *Stirling Castle*

MAITLAND *and* LINDSAY

LINDSAY

Is there such breach between them ? why, men said,  
When they would ride through Edinburgh and he  
Bare-headed at her bridle, she would take  
By force and thrust his cap upon his head  
With loving might and laughing ; and at Leith  
They saw the false fight on the waters join  
And mid-May pageants that shone down the sun,  
As with glad eyes of lovers newly wed  
Whose hearts were of the revel ; and so soon  
Are hearts and eyes divided ?

MAITLAND

Not an hour  
May she draw breath but in his eye, nor see  
But whom he shall give entrance : in her sight  
He thought to have slain me, but she came between  
And set for shield her bosom to his sword  
In her own chamber ; so each day and night  
By violent act or viler word than deed  
He turns her eyes to water-springs of tears,  
Who leaves not yet to love him ; such strong hold  
By flesh or spirit or either made one fire  
Hath such men's love on women made as she,  
For no foul speech I think nor strokes nor shame  
Would she go from him, but to keep him fast  
Would burn the world with fire ; and no force less  
Shall burn their bonds in sunder.

LINDSAY

We will bring  
And kindle it in their sight. They are southward fled  
To meet at Borthwick ; thither we design,  
To raise the Merse with Hume, and with Lord Mar  
And with the Douglas' following bind them round  
And take them in one snare, whence one of these  
Shall creep not forth with life or limb that feels  
No hound's fang fasten on it ; and his mate  
Shall see their feet smoke with his slaughtered blood,

SCENE XIII. *Borthwick Castle*

*The QUEEN and BOTHWELL ; MARY BEATON in  
attendance*

QUEEN

You should be hence again ; since you came in  
From Melrose with no levies at your back,  
We have heard no news of friends, and hear but now  
That we are ringed with Morton's folk about ;  
How shall he not have laid unhappy hand  
Upon your messenger that bare our word  
Of summons to the archbishop and your friend  
Balfour to be with Huntley at our side ?

BOTHWELL

Ay, he is trapped that bore my letters hence,  
I doubt not ; none have feet to run aright,  
Eyes to see true, hands to bring help, but they  
That move them to our ruin. This Balfour,  
Whom I laid trust on since our fiery night  
As on a true man bound of force to me,  
Has fallen in conference and device of plots,  
I hear, with that lean limb of policy  
That loves me not, James Melville, by whose mouth  
Being warned I meant to take out of his hand  
The castle-keys of Edinburgh and give  
To one my closer kinsman for more trust,  
He has made him friends of ancient foes, and seeks,  
By no less service than pursuit of them  
Who slew the king your husband, to deserve



Their favour who are risen of honest heart  
But to chastise these slayers, of whom God wot  
Themselves were none, nor he that hunts with them  
Upon the trail of treason. O, your lords  
Are worthy friends and enemies, and their tongues  
As trusty as their hands are innocent,  
When they see time to turn.

QUEEN

I would their lives  
Lay all between my lips, and with one breath  
I might cut all theirs off ! nor tongue nor hand  
Should rise of them against us, to deny  
Their work disclaimed when done. What slaves are  
these  
That make their hands red with men's secret blood  
And with their tongues would lick them white, and  
wash  
The sanguine grain out with false froth of words  
From lying lips that kissed the dead to death  
And now cry vengeance for him ? But, my lord,  
Make you haste hence to-night ere they be here  
That if we tarry will beset us ; I  
Should hang but as a fetter on your foot,  
Which should pass free forth to Dunbar, and raise  
With sound even of its tread and forward speed  
The force of all the border.

BOTHWELL

Where I go,  
There shall you not be far to find ; to-night  
I will sleep here.

QUEEN

God give you rest and strength,  
To make that heart which is the lord of mine  
Fresh as the spirit of sunrise ! for last night  
You slept not well.

BOTHWELL

No ; I had dreams, that am  
No natural dreamer ; I will sleep apart,  
With Cranston's son to lie at hand, or wait  
If I lack service.

QUEEN

Nay, let me be there ;  
I will not weary you with speech, nor break  
Your sleep with servile and officious watch,  
But sit and keep it as a jewel is kept  
That is more dear than eyesight to its lord,  
Or as mine eyes can keep not now their own,  
Now slumber sits far from them. Let me wake.

BOTHWELL

No, not with me.

QUEEN

What, lest I trouble you ?  
Should my being there put dreams in you again,  
To cross your sleep with me ?

BOTHWELL

Belike it might.

## QUEEN

Nay, I was no part of your dreams, I think ;  
You dream not on me waking nor asleep,  
But if you dream on no face else nor mine,  
I will be yet content.

## BOTHWELL

Well, so it was,  
I dreamt at once of either ; yet I know not  
Why I should tell my dream ; your lord that was,  
They say, would prattle of his fears by night  
And faces of false peril ; I was never  
So loth by day to face what fear I might  
As to be sick in darkness ; but this dream  
I would not see again. Yet was it nought ;  
I seemed to stand between two gulfs of sea  
On a dark strait of rock, and at my foot  
The ship that bore me broken ; and there came  
Out of the waves' breach crying of broken men  
And sound of splintering planks, and all the hull  
Shattered and strewn in pieces ; and my head  
Was as my feet and hands, bare, and the storm  
Blew hard with all its heart upon me ; then  
Came you, a face with weeping eyes, and hair  
Half glimmering with a broken crown that shone  
Red as of molten iron ; but your limbs  
Were swathed about and shrouded out of sight,  
Or shown but as things shapeless that the bier  
Shows ready for the grave ; only the head  
Floated, with eyes fast on me, and beneath  
A bloodlike thread dividing the bare throat  
As with a needle's breadth, but all below

Was muffled as with cerecloths ; and the eyes  
Wept ; then came one we wot of clad in black  
And smiling, and laid hands on me more cold  
Than is a snake's kiss or the grave's, and thrust  
Between that severed head, weeping and crowned,  
That mourned upon me, and mine eyes that watched,  
Her own strange head wrapped widow-like and wan  
In habit of one sorrowing, but with lips  
That laughed to kiss me ; and therewith at once  
Your face as water flowed out of my sight,  
And on mine own I felt as drops of blood  
Falling, but if your tears they were or hers  
Or either's blood I knew not ; on mine eyes  
The great dead night shut doorwise like a wall,  
And in mine ears there sprang a noise of chains  
And teeth ground hard of prison-grates that jarred  
And split as 'twere with sound my heart, which was  
As ice that cleaves in sunder : for there came  
Through that black breathless air an iron note  
Of locks that shut and sounded, and being dumb  
There left me quick entombed in stone, and hid  
Too deep for the day's eyeshot ; then I woke  
With the sea's roaring and the wind's by night  
Fresh in my sense, and on my travailing heart  
A weight of walls and floors and upper earth  
That held me down below the breach o' the sea  
Where its tide's wash kept witness overhead  
How went the scornful days and nights above  
Where men forgot me and the living sun  
As a dead dog passed over.

QUEEN

What, alone ?

She went not with you living underground

To sit in chains and hear the sea break ? nay,  
She would not cast you off. This was your love,  
Your love of her and need of her sweet sight,  
That brought her so upon your sleep, and made  
Your sense so fearful of all things but this,  
And all else heard and seen so terrible  
But her face only : she should comfort you,  
Whom I should bring to wreck ; why, so she said,  
Saying how she had loved you whom I loved not ;  
yea,

Her eyes were sad, she said, that saw forsooth  
So little love between us : this sweet word,  
This word of hers at parting, this it was  
Of which your dream was fashioned, to give sign  
How firm she sits and fast yet in your heart,  
Where I was never.

## BOTHWELL

Well, how be it soe'er,  
I would not dream again this dead dream out  
For less than kingly waking : so good night,  
For I will sleep alone.

## QUEEN

No, with my heart,  
That lies down with you though it sleeps not. Go,  
And dream of no less loving prayer than mine  
That calls on God for sleep to comfort you  
And keep your heart from sense of aught more hard  
Than her great love who made it. [*Exit BOTHWELL.*

'Tis a night  
That puts our France into my mind ; even here  
By those warm stars a man might call it June,

Were such nights many : their same flower-bright  
eyes

Look not more fair on Paris, that mine own  
Again shall hardly look on. Is it not strange  
That in this grey land and these grievous hours  
I should so find my spirit and soul transformed  
And fallen in love with pain, my heart that was  
Changed and made humble to his loveless words  
And force as of a master ? By my faith,  
That was till now fixed never and made as fire  
To stand a sunlike star in love's live heaven—  
A heaven found one in hue and heat with hell—  
I had rather be mishandled as I am  
Of this first man that ever bound me fast  
Than worshipped through the world with breaking  
hearts

That gave their blood for worship. I am glad  
He sometime should misuse me ; else I think  
I had not known if I could love or no.  
If you could love man with my heart as now,  
You would not mock nor marvel.

MARY BEATON

No, not then.

QUEEN

It is not in your heart : there lies not power  
In you to be for evil end or good  
The strange thing that is I.

MARY BEATON

There does not, no,  
Nor can lie ever : could I love at all,

It were but as mean women, meanly ; so  
I do the best to love not.

QUEEN

Hark ! what noise ?

Look forth and see.

MARY BEATON

A sound of men and steeds ;  
The ring is round us ; hark, the cry of Hume,  
There Lindsay, and there Mar.

QUEEN

Call up my lord :

I will not go to vex him ; but do you  
Haste and awake them. [*Exit* MARY BEATON.]

Be it not in mine eyes  
That he first sees death risen upon his sleep,  
If we must die ; being started out of rest,  
If he should curse me, were my heart not slain  
With the opening of his eyes in wrath on mine ?

*Re-enter* MARY BEATON

MARY BEATON

My lord is raised and fled ; but in the press  
The lord of Cranston's son that slept with him  
Is fallen by flight into the enemy's hands,  
Who cry out for him yet as hounds that quest,  
And roar as on their quarry.

QUEEN

Fled, and safe ?

MARY BEATON

Ay, past their hands' reach that had rent him else ;  
Be sure he is forth, and free, or you should hear  
More triumph in these cries.

QUEEN

God, thou art good !

Fling wide the window : I will know of them  
If they be come to slay me.—What, my lords !  
Are all these men of mine that throng by night  
To make such show of service, and present  
Strange offices of duty ? Where are ye  
That are chief ushers to their turbulent love  
Who come thus riotously to proffer it ?  
Which is first here ? a bold man should he be  
That takes unbidden on him such desert—  
Let me not say, a traitor.

LINDSAY (*without*)

Where is he,  
The traitor that we seek ? for here is none  
But in your bosom.

QUEEN

Here then ends your search,  
For here am I ; and traitors near enough  
I see to pierce the bosom that they seek,  
Where never shall be treason till its blood  
Be spilt by hands of traitors that till now  
Durst never rise so near it.



LINDSAY

Give him forth,  
Or we will have these walls down.

QUEEN

What, with words?  
Is there such blast of trumpets in your breath  
As shook the towers down of the foes of God  
At the seventh sounding? yet we stand and laugh  
That hear such brave breath blown and stormlike  
speech  
Fly round our ears: is it because your war,  
My lords, is waged with women, that ye make  
Such woman's war on us?

MAR (*without*)

Madam, we come  
To take you from his hand that is your shame,  
And on his shameful head revenge that blood  
Which was shed guiltless; hither was he fled,  
We know, into your shelter: yield him up,  
Ere yet worse come than what hath worst come yet.

QUEEN

There is none here to die by you but I,  
And none to mock you dying. Take all your  
swords;  
It is a woman that they came to slay,  
And that contemns them; go not back for fear;  
Pluck up your hearts; one valiant stroke or twain,  
And ye are perfect of your work, and I

For ever quit of treason ; and I swear,  
By God's and by his mother's name and mine,  
Except ye slay me presently, to have  
Such vengeance of you and my traitors all  
As the loud world shall ring with ; so to-night  
Be counselled, and prevent me, that am here  
Yet in your hands ; if ye dare slay me not,  
Ye are dead now here already in my doom :  
Take heart, and live to mock it.

MAR

He is fled.

Here boots us not to tarry, nor change words  
With her that hath such vantage as to know  
We have missed our prize and purpose here, which  
was  
To take the traitor that is fled, and bring  
Whither we now ride foiled, to Edinburgh,  
Thence to return upon them.

LINDSAY

Hear yet once ;

You, madam, till our day be set of doom,  
Look to the adulterer's head that hence is flown,  
Whose shame should now stand redder in your face  
Than blushes on his hand your husband's blood,  
And cleave more fast ; for that dead lord's revenge  
Will we make proclamation, and raise up  
The streets and stones for vengeance of your town  
That sits yet sullied with bloodguiltiness  
Till judgment make it clean ; whose walls to-night  
Myself for fault of better ere I sleep  
Will scale though gates be fastened, and therein

Bring back and stablsh justice that shall be  
A memory to the world and unborn men  
Of murder and adultery.

QUEEN

Good my lord,  
We thank you for the care you have and pains  
To speak before you smite ; and that so long,  
The deed can follow not on the swift word  
For lack of spirit and breath to mate with it ;  
So that they know who hear your threat betimes  
What fear it bears and danger, and for fear  
Take counsel to forestall it. Make good speed ;  
For if your steed be shod but with fleet speech,  
Ere you shall stride the wall of our good town  
Its foot may trip upon a traitor's grave.

MARY BEATON

They ride fast yet ; hear you their starting cry ?

QUEEN

For each vile word and venomous breath of theirs  
I will desire at my lord's hand a head  
When he shall bring them bound before my foot.  
If thou hast counsel in thee, serve me now :  
I must be forth, and masked in such close wise  
As may convey me secret to his side  
Whence till our wars be done I will not part,  
Nor then in peace for ever : in this shape  
I should ride liable to all eyes and hands  
That might waylay me flying ; but I will play  
As in a masque for pastime, and put on

A horseboy's habit or some meaner man's  
That wears but servant's steel upon his thigh  
And on his sleeve the badge but of a groom,  
And so pass noteless through toward Haddington  
Whither my lord had mind to flee at need  
And there expect me. Come ; the night wears out ;  
The shifting wind is sharper than it was,  
And the stars falter. Help me to put off  
This outward coil of woman ; my heart beats  
Fast as for fear a coward's might beat, for joy  
That spurs it forth by night on warriors' ways  
And stings it with sharp hope to find his face  
That shall look loving on me, and with smiles  
Mock the false form and cheer the constant heart  
That for his love's sake would be man's indeed.

## ACT IV

*JOHN KNOX*

TIME : JUNE 15 AND 16, 1567

SCENE I. *Carberry Hill**The QUEEN, BOTHWELL, and Soldiers*

## QUEEN

I WOULD this field where fate and we must cross  
Were other than it is ; but for this thought,  
On what ill night some score of years ago  
Here lay our enemy's force before that fight  
Which made next day the face of Scotland red  
And trod her strength down under English feet,  
I would not shrink in this wide eye of dawn,  
In the fair front of such a summer's day,  
To meet the mailed face of my traitor's host  
And with bared brows outbrave it.

## BOTHWELL

Keep that heart  
For fear we need it ; look beyond the bridge  
There at this hill's foot on the western bank  
How strong they stand under the gathering light ;  
I have not seen a battle fairer set

Or in French fields or these our thirstier lands  
That feed unslaked on blood.

QUEEN

They grow now green,  
These hills and meadows that with slain men's lives  
Have fed the flocks of war ; come ten years yet,  
And though this day should drench them with more  
death

Than that day's battle, not a stain shall stand  
On their fresh face for witness. Had God pleased  
To set a strong man armed with hands to fight  
And on his head his heritage to keep,  
Sworded and crowned a king, in my sad stead,  
To fill the place I had not might to hold,  
And for the child then bitterly brought forth  
Unseasonable, that being but woman born  
Broke with the news her father's heart, who died  
Desperate in her of comfort, had he sent  
The warrior that I would be, and in time  
To look with awless eye on that day's fight  
That reddened with the ruin of our hopes  
The hour that rocked my cradle, who shall say  
The scathe of Pinkie Cleugh and all that blood  
Had made the memory so unfortunate  
Of that which was my birth-time ? Being a man,  
And timelier born to better hap than mine,  
I might have set upon that iron day  
Another mark than signs it in our sight  
Red with reproach for ever.

BOTHWELL

Ay, my queen ?  
These four nights gone you met me soldierlike

Escaped from Borthwick, whence I brought you in,  
Three darkling hours past midnight, to Dunbar,  
Where you put off that sheath of fighting man  
For this poor woman's likeness yet you wear,  
Wherein you rode with your six hundred men  
To meet at Haddington but two days since  
These sixteen hundred border folk I led  
And pass with me to Seyton ; did you find  
Your life more light in you or higher your heart  
Inside that habit than this woman's coat  
That sits so short upon you ?

QUEEN

By my life,

I had forgot by this to be ashamed  
Of the strange shape I ride in, but your tongue  
Smites my cheek red as is this scanted weed  
Wherein I mask my queenship ; yet God knows  
I had liefer ride thus forth toward such a day  
Than hide my sick heart and its fears at home  
In kinglier garments than this mask of mine,  
Thus with my kirtle kilted to the knee  
Like girls that ride in poor folks' ballads forth  
For love's sake and for dangers' less than mine.  
Yet had I rather as your henchman ride  
At your right hand and hear your bridle ring  
Than sit thus womanly to watch men strike.

BOTHWELL

There will be parleying first ; I have word of this,  
That they set forth at heaviest of the night  
From Edinburgh to cross our march betimes,  
And by the French ambassador your friend

At Musselburgh were overtaken, whence  
We look for news by him what hearts they bear,  
What power and what intent ; he hath ta'en on him  
To stand between our parts as mediator  
And bear the burden of our doubtful peace ;  
We must fight mouth to mouth ere hand to hand,  
But the clean steel must end it.

QUEEN

Now would God

I had but one day's manhood, and might stand  
As king in arms against this battle's breach  
A twelve hours' soldier, and my life to come  
Be bounded as a woman's ; all those days  
That must die darkling should not yet put out  
The fiery memory and the light of joy  
That out of this had lightened, and its heat  
Should burn in them for witness left behind  
On those piled ashes of my latter life.  
O God, for one good hour of man, and then  
Sleep or a crown for ever !

BOTHWELL

By God's light,

The man that had no joy to strike for you  
Were such a worm as God yet never made  
For men to tread on Kiss me ; by your eyes  
And fiery lips that make my heart's blood hot,  
I swear to take this signet of your kiss  
As far into the fight as man may bear,  
And strike as two men in mine arm and stroke  
Struck with one sense and spirit



QUEEN

If I might change

But this day with you in your stead to strike  
And you look on me fighting, as for me  
You have fought ere this last heat so many a prize,  
Or for your own hand ere your own was mine,  
I would pray God for nought again alive.  
But since my heart can strike not in my hand,  
Fight you for me ; put on my heart to yours,  
And let the might of both enforce your arm  
With more than its own manhood and that strength  
Which is your natural glory.

BOTHWELL

Sweet, I think,

When we have rid through this day's wrath, if God  
Shall give us peace and kingdom and long life  
And make them fruitful to us, we shall bring forth  
A brood of kings as lions. Now in brief  
If this shall be or shall not may we know,  
For look where yonder facing to the sun  
Comes up to usward from the under field  
One with a flag of message ; in mine eye  
It is the Frenchman.

QUEEN

I will meet him here ;

Here will I sit upon this rock for throne  
And give such audience as my fortune may ;  
Either the last that shall salute me queen  
Or first of my new reign, that from this day  
Shall fearfully begin for them whose fear  
Till now has held me shackled, and my will  
Confined of theirs unqueenly.

BOTHWELL

I meantime

Will see our line in order ; for this truce  
Must hold not long ; I would our hosts should meet  
Before the heat strikes of the middle day  
And this June sun drop on our soldiers' heads  
Or shoot their eyes out. *[Exit.*

QUEEN

If God give us peace !

Yet though he give and we twain see good days,  
I would not lose for many fortunate years  
And empire ringed with smooth security  
The sharp and dangerous draught of this delight  
That out of chance and peril and keen fear  
Springs as the wine out of the trampled grape  
To make this hour sweet to my lips, and bid  
My dancing heart be like a wave in the sun  
When the sea sways between the sun and wind  
As my sense now between the fears and hopes  
That die to-day for ever. O, this doubt  
That is not helpless but has armour on  
And hands to fight with, has more joy withal  
And puts more spirit into the flesh of life,  
More heart into the blood and light in the eyes,  
Than the utter hour of triumph, and the fight  
More than the prize is worth man's prizing ; yea,  
For when all's won all's done, and nought to do  
Is as a chain on him that with void hands  
Sits pleasureless and painless. I had rather  
Have looked on Actium with Mark Antony  
Than bound him fast on Cydnus. O my hour,  
Be good to me, as even for the doubt's sake

More than safe life I love thee ; yet would choose  
Not now to know, though I might see the end,  
If thou wilt be good to me ; do thy work,  
Have thine own end ; and be thou bad or good,  
Thou shalt nor smite nor crown a queen in heart  
Found lesser than her fortune.

*Enter DU CROC*

Now, my lord,

What is their will who by such sovereign show  
Should be my lords indeed ? if you that came  
'Twixt crown and crown ambassador pass now  
Between our camps on message : but this day  
Shall leave in Scotland but one sovereignty  
To see that sun sink.

DU CROC

Madam, from the lords

I come on errand but for love and fear  
That mové me toward your highness ; on whose part  
I reasoning with them of their faith to you  
And bond wherein their loyalties should live,  
By counsel of the Laird of Lethington,  
Was charged to bear you from them present word  
For what they stand against your sight in arms,  
And will not but by force of yours dissolve  
Till it be granted.

QUEEN

Speak, my lord ; I know  
Your heart is whole and noble as their faith  
Is flawed and rotten ; no disloyal word  
Shall make your tongue disloyal in mine ear,  
Speaking for them.

## DU CROC

This is their whole demand ;  
 That from the bloody hand which holds your own  
 You pluck it forth and cast him from your sight  
 To judgment who now stands through you secure  
 And makes his weapon of your wounded name  
 And of your shame his armour ; and to him  
 They offer fight with equal hand to hand  
 Of noble seconds in what sum he will  
 To match in blood and number with his own,  
 If so he list to meet their chosen of men  
 In personal battle, backed with less or more  
 Or singly sworded ; but this much they swear,  
 They had rather make their beds in the earth alive  
 Than yet sit still and let this evil be.  
 And on your own part I beseech your grace  
 Set not your heart against the hearts of these  
 Lest it be broken of them, but betimes  
 Call yet to mind what grief and shame will be  
 Among your friends in France and all our part  
 To see you so with this man's hap inwound  
 That in his fall you cast yourself away  
 And hand in hand run on with him to death.

**QUEEN**

They are all forsworn that seek his death ; all they  
With these blown tongues now questing for his blood  
By judgment set him free as innocence,  
And now take back the doom they gave, and turn  
On their own heads the lie : devise such shame  
As lewd folk loathe, to gird themselves withal  
And wear it for a jewel ; seek and set

The name of liar upon them like a crown,  
And bind about them as a coat and cloak  
Plain treason and ungilded infamy,  
Bare as a beggar ; let them sue for grace,  
Kneel here and ask me favour ; save as thus  
I treat not with them. Say how I sit here  
In this mean raiment, on this naked stone,  
Their queen to judge them, and with heart to weigh  
Their fault against my mercy ; which yet once,  
Though hardly their submission may deserve,  
Say, haply they may find.

*Re-enter BOTHWELL*

BOTHWELL

Good day, my lord.  
You look far off upon me ; by your brow  
And strange-eyed salutation I may read  
The burden of your this day's embassy.  
Is it but I whom all these ranked in arms  
Are come against to battle ?

DU CROC

Ay, my lord ;  
No hand is raised there dangerous to the queen  
Nor thought of heart not loyal.

BOTHWELL

Why to me ?  
What hurt have I done to them ? none of these  
But would be gladly in my place, who had  
The heart to seek it ; 'tis the braver man  
That ever fortune follows : what I hold

I have won not basely, but from forth her hand  
Have ta'en it manlike, and with spirit as good  
Have girt me to maintain it. For my part,  
I seek no bloodshed, but in single field  
Will meet with whom their lot shall fall upon  
That shall be found fair champion on their part  
To bear the general quarrel ; and to this  
My state and present name shall be no bar,  
But the queen's consort as her man shall fight  
In any good cause simply with God's help  
With any sword that shames not mine to meet.

## QUEEN

It is my cause ; me must they strike, or none ;  
Myself am all the quarrel ; let them yield  
Or give me battle.

## BOTHWELL

Then, no need of words ;  
Let but your excellency stand here by  
And see the show as once that envoy bound  
'Twixt Hannibal and Scipio ; by God's grace  
This too shall be worth sight and good report  
If he not fail us.

## DU CROC

Madam, with rent heart  
Must I take leave then of you.

## QUEEN

Sir, farewell ;

I pray you say not that you saw me weep ;  
These tears are not to turn the sword's edge soft  
Nor made of fear nor pity ; but my heart

Holds no more rule on my rebellious eyes  
Than truth on those my traitors ; yet I trust  
Again to bring both under. [Exit DU CROC.

BOTHWELL

We must fight ;  
Yet had I rather take it on mine hand  
Than dare the general field.

QUEEN

No, for God's love.

BOTHWELL

God hath not so much love of us to serve ;  
Nor would I wager on his head to-day  
That he shall fight upon our side. Look there ;  
They are at point to cross ; even now you see  
The first glint on them stirring of the sun  
As they set forth to make by the eastern bank  
Along the meadows edgeways towards Dalkeith  
Before they turn in wheel and take the hills ;  
I see their bent of battle ; yet we keep  
The slopes and crest here with our covering lines  
If they stand fast.

QUEEN

What, have you fear of that ?

BOTHWELL

I cannot tell ; the day grows fiery hot :  
I would we might close in at once and strike  
Before the noon burn ; all the pause we make

Who stand here idle watchers till they join  
Takes off some heart from us for weariness  
And gives us doubt ; I would the field were set.

## QUEEN

Why should not we that wait for them and chafe  
Break rather on them coming, and brush off  
Their gathering muster from the hillskirts there  
With one sheer stroke of battle as from heaven  
Right on them hurling down with all our host  
Out of these heights ere they made head below ?

## BOTHWELL

No, my sweet captain ; we must hold this fast,  
This height of vantage, and keep close our ranks  
As I have ranged in order : see again,  
How they sweep round and settle fast in file  
There on the ridge of Cowsland, with their backs  
Turned on the sun that climbs toward noon too fast,  
And in their front that hollow gap of hill  
Three crossbow-shots across ; so far apart  
We look upon each other for a breath  
And hold our hands from battle ; but you see  
How soon both sides must lash together : yea,  
I would we might not hold off yet an hour  
But close at once and end.

## QUEEN

That burgh below,  
Is it not Preston Pans ? These hills are set  
As stages for the show of such high game  
As is played out for God's content on earth



Between men's kings and kingdoms ; yet I think  
He that beholds hath no such joy o' the game  
As he that plays, nor can the joy be known  
Save of man only, that man has to play  
When the die's throw rings death for him or life.  
How clear the wind strikes from the mounting sun—  
I am glad at heart the day we have of fight  
Should look thus lively on both sides that meet  
Beneath so large an open eye of heaven.  
The wind and sun are in my blood ; I feel  
Their fire and motion in me like a breath  
That makes the heart leap. Dear, I too have read  
The tale of Rome whence lightly you chose out  
A likeness for us ; but the parts we bear,  
We are to play them with a difference, take  
A fairer end upon us though we fall  
Than they that in their hazard were most like  
To this our imminent fortune : had I been  
She for whose lips love let the round world fall  
And all man's empire founder, on that day  
When earth's whole strengths met on the warring sea  
And side with side clashed of the kingdomed world,  
I had not given my galleys wings for fear  
To bear me out of the eye of battle, nor  
Put space of flight between me and my love,  
More than I think on this wave's edge that foams  
To leave our chance unshipwrecked, or forsake  
My more imperial Antony.

BOTHWELL

Would that now  
We stood less near their hazard ; on our part

I fear to see the lines already melt  
If we hold longer off, and this firm front  
Unfix itself and with no stroke dissolve  
As snows in summer : half my folk by this  
For thirst are fallen upon the wine-casks there  
We brought from Seyton ; and for those that stand,  
We have not half their hearts upon our side  
Whose hands are armed to uphold it. I must fight  
With whom they choose, and take upon my hand  
The day with all its issue : if our cause  
Be set upon the general cast of fight,  
It is but lost. Let messengers be sent  
To know of the enemy if his challenge hold  
Which I stand armed to answer ; but no Scot  
Shall bear the message and betray our need :  
Two Frenchmen of your guard shall cross, and bring  
Their fighter's name back that my sword must know  
And we twain meet and end it in fair field  
Between these ranks ; and for my single part,  
I am glad the chance should hang but on my hand  
And my sole stroke determine the dim war  
That flags yet in the dark and doubt of fate  
Till mine arm fix it fast, and in God's sight  
Confirm and close the chapter of it. Come,  
Choose you your envoys.

## QUEEN

Nay, choose you the man  
That you will fight with ; let him be not one  
Who had no part with us in Darnley's blood,  
So God shall strike not on his unjust side  
Who fights against you.

## BOTHWELL

'Faith, if God were judge,  
He should not do us right to approve their cause  
Who helped us to that slaying, and in its name  
Take on them now to accuse us, and appeal  
As guiltless to him against their proper deed  
And this right hand that wrought but with their will ;  
Wherefore so far forth as it hangs on God  
From such a champion I should bear the bell,  
If he be righteous ; which to assure you of,  
That even for God's sake you may feel no fear,  
Let Morton meet me.

## QUEEN

O, that two-tongued knave !  
The worst of all my traitors, whom I spared  
And should have slain when you had brought him  
home  
To help despatch his friend that had been ! nay,  
Him shall you meet not : he shall die no death  
So brave as by your sword ; the axe thinks long  
To clasp his cursed neck ; your hand, dear lord,  
Shall not redeem it.

## BOTHWELL

Come, content you, sweet ;  
Him I must meet, or other ; and myself  
Care not if one that struck with us it be  
Or one that struck not ; only for your ease,  
To make you trustful for God's judgment's sake  
And confident of justice, I thought well

To choose a man of counsel with us then  
And on this challenge fight with him, that God  
Might witness with us of his treacherous cause  
If I should win the field ; but by this hand,  
I put more trust in it and in my sword  
Than in God's hand or judgment. Have no fear ;  
What is our cause you know, and in what right  
We stand here armed ; vex not your constant heart  
To seek for help or warrant more than this,  
Which if it cannot stand us yet in stead  
It shall avail not to devise fresh means  
To underprop with prayer and trust in God  
And stay our souls with footless faith or hope  
That other might will aid our right than ours.  
Here shall we try it : and you, sustain your spirit  
Still at its height and poise of fortitude  
Firmly to front this infirm face of things  
That changes on us gazing, and each hour  
Shifts as the wind that shapes it ; fear nor hope,  
Bethink yourself, shall make or unmake fate,  
Nor faith unbuild or build it, but that end  
Will be at last that will be. So, keep heart ;  
Choose you two messengers for trust and speed  
While I go form again these lines of ours  
That break and loosen in the enemy's sight,  
If time shall let reshape their ranks, and mend  
The breach of their defection ; in short space  
Shall we have answer back whom I must meet,  
And then my sword shall take this day's chance up  
And ease us of its trouble. Nay, make haste ;  
Too long I stand yet here ; send off at once  
Our message, and bid speed their word again  
Before our battle melt out of our hands  
And we be ta'en with no man at our back.

SCENE II. *The Camp of the Lords*

MORTON, LINDSAY, DU CROC, KIRKALDY *of* GRANGE,  
*and others*

MORTON

Will she not let him fight ?

KIRKALDY

With no mean man,  
Or lesser than himself ; he shall not mate  
With me nor Tullibardine ; we must find  
One equal to make proffer of his hand,  
And by these messengers again returned  
That brought her first word and took back our own  
Himself now bids you forth by name to take  
This justice on your sword.

MORTON

And by my hand,  
I am as glad as of his present death  
That I should be the man of all chosen out  
To lay his death upon him. Let him know  
I am armed by this for answer.

•

LINDSAY

Nay, my lord ;  
Who fights with Bothwell on this general plea  
For all the land's sake, should not only bear  
The right upon his sword of this large cause,

But stand in the eye of all the land so far  
From all men's charge or any man's conceit  
That might repute him touched or mixed at all  
With Bothwell's works, or once but on his part  
Suspected in time past or glanced upon  
Of enemies' eyes as parcel of his act,  
That no sharp tongue on earth might find the mean  
To tax his victory with unrighteousness  
If he should conquer,—as were yours the sword  
I doubt not it should surely—nor dispute  
The justice and pure truth that on our side  
Took up this challenge. You, they know, were one  
Of that dead man once wronged, and sworn, they say,  
To turn his treacheries on his head alive  
And with his own lie pierce him as a sword ;  
He never did me wrong, nor gave men cause  
To deem his death a thing that I should seek  
As just and natural part of my desire ;  
So shall none hold it questionable or strange  
If I should stand against his slayer in arms  
As to do battle on the dead man's part  
That was toward me no traitor.

MORTON

Well, my lord,  
Take you then this upon you ; to your hand  
I shall not grudge to yield that honour up  
Which none more noble in the world might wield  
Nor heart more true deserve ; in sign whereof  
Here from mine own side I ungird the sword  
Which was my grandsire's, whose two-handed stroke  
Did suchlike service as shall you to-day  
To Scotland, in his hand that belled the cat,

When other slaves that clung about the throne  
Made the land foul as this doth ; to which end  
I gird you with it, that its edge again  
May lop as high a dangerous head away  
And shear a weed as poisonous. This it was  
That drove to death even with its lift and flash  
The crew of Cochrane, as in scorn to smite  
Their necks that craved the halter, and were bowed  
Before the light and wind but of its stroke  
Down to the dust and death ; and this again  
Struck with one blow to hell by Fala brook  
Spens of Kilspindie, who being overblown  
With favour and light love of the fourth James  
Gave with his life all these to Douglas up  
At the first change of sword-play ; from such hand  
By heritage I have it, as from mine  
You now, my lord, by gift ; and I well think  
That in those great dead hands of Bell-the-Cat  
It did no worthier work than ere we sleep  
This land in yours shall see it.

LINDSAY

Sir, with glad heart

I take the burden to me thankfully  
That this great gift lays on ; as with my hands  
I strip this armour off and take from yours  
To gird my body left else weaponless•  
This the most prosperous and most noble steel  
That ever did truth right, so from my soul  
God witness me that I put off all thought  
Save of his justice to be served and shown,  
And keep no memory more to enforce my hand  
That he for whose dead sake I am girt to fight

With one that slew him was of my kindred blood,  
Nor this mine own foe that I seek to slay,  
But only that I stand here single-souled  
For this land's sake and all its noble brood,  
To do their judgment on his murderous head  
Who is their general traitor ; and I pray  
Here on my knees before these warlike lines

[*Kneeling.*

That God on whom I call will equally  
This day preserve and punish in men's sight  
The just and unjust that he looks upon,  
With blameless hand dividing their just doom  
To one and other ; yea, as thou art Lord,  
With eye to read between our hearts, and hand  
To part between us punishment and grace,  
Hear, God, and judge : and as thy sentence is  
So shall man's tongue speak ever of this day  
And of his cause that conquers.

MORTON

Laird of Grange,

While these that twice brought message from the  
queen

Bear now this last news back of what they hear,  
Lest when the traitor knows whom he shall meet  
His foul heart fail him and his false foot flee  
By what way ferth is left him toward Dunbar,  
Take you two hundred horse, and with good speed  
Cross to the right beyond this hollow ground  
And cut him off ; so though he fain would fly  
And she stand fast or follow, yet we hold  
As in one toil the lioness and the wolf  
That clomb by night into the lion's bed,



Who stand now staked about with nets and ringed  
With pikes and hounds of hunters, glare at bay  
With eyes and teeth that shine against us yet,  
But the fierce feet are trammelled in our toils  
Nor shall the tongues lap life again of man.

## DU CROC

Ay, lion-like, my lord, she bears herself,  
As who should shake all spears or shafts away  
Like leaves that fell upon her, and all fears  
As grains of dust brushed off ; but he too makes  
Such gallant show at need of such good heart  
As in this utter peril where he stands  
Might win for one that had no unjust cause  
Pity and praise of enemies, and for him  
At least such mingled and discoloured fame  
As falls not on a coward ; nor can men  
Report him in his end and sore extreme  
But as a soldier tried of hand and brain,  
Skilful and swift, with heart to match his eye  
And wit to serve them ; could these yet avail  
To ransom him by spirit of soldiership  
And craft with courage tempered as with fire  
To wield with fiery cunning the wide war,  
He should not fall but mightily, nor cease  
But with a strife as earthquake.

•

## MORTON

Well, my lord,  
With no such strife we think to win him.—Go,  
And if they send again to treat with us  
Speak you with her and bring us once more word.

SCENE III. *The Queen's Camp**The QUEEN and BOTHWELL*

QUEEN

Are we quite lost ?

BOTHWELL

Ay, if I fight not : but  
I will not die and fight not.

QUEEN

What, no help ?

Is there not left a score of manlike men  
To stand and strike round us that in their ring  
May fight enclosed and fall where none shall fly ?  
Are all our strengths slid from us ? not one troop  
That has not piecemeal dropped with shame away ?  
Not some twelve friends to back us yet and die  
As never men died nobler ?

BOTHWELL

No, not three :

My levies there of Lothian and the Merse  
Are slipped away like water ; of your men  
Not yet four hundred lie along the heights,  
Nor half will stay of these a half-hour hence.  
Look too where yonder rides about the hill  
The Laird of Grange between us and Dunbar  
As to make onset with two hundred horse  
Thence where the way is smooth, while those in front  
Charge up the hill right on our unfenced camp

And their trap's teeth shut on us. This remains  
Of all our chance, this one way to make end,  
That while they yet refuse me not a man  
To bear the day's weight on his sword and mine  
I go to meet whom they soever choose  
With no more question made ; and this I will,  
If yet they grant me but their meanest man  
For opposite as equal.

## QUEEN

Have they hearts,  
That have you for their fiery star of fight  
To see and not to follow ? That I could  
But give mine own among all these away  
And with the parcels of it portioned out  
Divide myself into a hundred hearts  
Of manlier-spirited blood, to raise us up  
For these a tribe of soldiers ! Speak to them,  
And they will hear and hunger to go on  
Full of your words to death ; yea, all as I  
Will thirst to die around you. O my God !  
What is their blood that it can kindle not  
To be so called of such a chief to die,  
To hear his words and leap not ? Hast thou made  
Such stuff of man's flesh as we take for man,  
And mixed not soul enough to serve the hound  
Who gives for love his life up ? These go back,  
These that might die, they start aside from death,  
They have no joy to close with it, but fear,  
These that I deemed, come what might worst on us,  
Should fall with face and heart one fire of joy  
To ride on death and grapple him and die.  
Have I not heard of men once in the world ?

I see none only but mine only love,  
Who finds not one to follow. You shall fight,  
And if we thrive not shame them with your end  
As I with mine ensuing. That I might stand  
Your second, and my sword be page to yours,  
As on your death my death should wait at need  
And halt not after ! No, you shall not die.  
O miserable white hanging hands, that rest  
Baffled and bloodless ! let your kingdom go,  
Let all things pass together ; what of price  
Should ye keep back that could not fight for him  
Who falls for lack of seconds ? Nay, the fault  
Comes all of me that fail him, I it is  
Bring down that high head to the earth with mine,  
That helmless head, for my sake ; O, for love's,  
Kiss me, and kill me ! be not wroth, but strike,  
For if I live I shall but deal more death  
And where I would not shall the more destroy,  
Living and loving ; yea, whom I would save,  
Him shall I slay the surelier ; save then me,  
Lest I do this and dying abhor myself,  
Save me and slay ; let not my love again  
Kill more than me, that would have shed my blood  
To spare the blood I shed ; make me now sure ;  
Let me cease here.

BOTHWELL

Peace, and give heed ; you see  
Whither the day has brought us, and what hope  
Holds anywhere of rescue ; this one lot  
Lies in my hand by fortune to be drawn,  
That yet by God's and by our enemies' grace  
I may fight singly though my whole world fail  
And end no less than soldier. Now, my queen,

As you are highest of women's hearts that live  
And nobler than your station stands your soul—  
As you had never fear, and in this past  
As ever you have loved me—by such sign  
And in such name I charge you, put me not  
In this great need to shame ; let me go forth  
As should yourself being king, had you the cause  
That our linked loves put on me ; by that heart  
That is so fain within you to be man's,  
Make me not meaner than the man I am  
Nor worthless of the name ; think with what soul  
Would you stand up to battle in my stead,  
And wrong me not to pluck that prize away  
Which were you I you would not yield to me  
Nor I would ask of you ; desire not this,  
To have me for your sake so vile a thing,  
When I should rise up worthiest, that no man  
Could bear such name and live ; bid me not be,  
Because you love me that are first on earth  
And crowned of queens most royal, such a slave  
As might not seek and be not spit upon  
The foulest favour that is given for gold  
From lips more vile than all things else but I  
Who durst not fight for you ; make me not this ;  
Let me die rather such a man as might,  
Having your love, had fortune loved him too,  
Have lived beside you kinglike, and not left  
Less memory than a king's. •

## QUEEN

O, you shall go :  
Look how I hold you not ; yes, you shall fight,  
And I sit strengthless here.—You shall not yet ;

If I did know that God were with my heart,  
Then should you go indeed ; could I sit sure  
My prayer had power upon him, and my cause  
Had made him mine to fight for me, and take  
My charge and this field's issue in his hand,  
I would not doubt to send you. Nay, myself  
Will speak to those my soldiers ; they will fight ;  
They shall not choose for shame who hear me speak  
But fear to fight not. O, for all this yet,  
If they were men about me, they would sweep  
Those traitors from the hill-side as a wind  
And make me way to live. What, if I speak,  
If I kneel to them, each man by his name,  
Bid him fight for me though I be not king,  
His king to lead him—as, had I been born  
My father's son, they should have fought, and found  
A king to fight for and a sword to lead  
Worth many a good sword's following—nay, but these  
That will not fight for you whose sword they see  
Worth all their swords to follow, for no king's  
Would they take heart to strike. Love, you shall go ;  
Send out a flag to bid one come and say  
Who dares of all fight with you. Why, methought  
This march-folk loved you and your sword's bright  
name  
That burned along their borders ; is there left  
No such fierce love of theirs and faith at need  
To do us soldier's service ?

BOTHWELL

Look, and see ;  
Their ranks unknit themselves and slide more fast  
From the bare slopes away whereon they stand

Than the last leaves or the last snows that fade  
From off the fields or branches : and this thaw  
Speaks not our spring, but winter. Let them pass ;  
If I may stand but in mine enemy's face,  
One foot of ours shall slip not, and one hand  
Be reddened on our side. I will go send  
Word with your flag of truce by Ormiston,  
To bid their spokesman to us. [Exit.

QUEEN

What am I worth,  
That can nor fight nor pray ? my heart is shut  
As a sealed spring of fire, and in mine ears  
This air that holds no thunder but fair day  
Sounds louder than a stricken brazen bell  
That rings in a great wind, or the blown sea  
That roars by night for shipwreck.

*Re-enter BOTHWELL with KIRKALDY*

BOTHWELL

Here is he  
That brings our lords' will with him, and shall show  
But in your private ear ; I while you please  
Will wait apart upon you. [Retires.

QUEEN

Is it you,  
Is it my friend of France, my knight and friend,  
Comes on such errand in mine extreme need  
To me that honoured him ? Sir, time has been  
That had one asked me what man most on earth  
I would for trust have sought the service of

In such sore straits as this, I had found no name  
But yours to leap the first upon my lips,  
On whom I have seen my father the French king  
Point with his hand, saying, *Yonder goes there one  
Of the most valiant men in all our age,*  
And ever would he choose you on his side  
In all his pastimes for your manhood's sake  
And might in jousts of men and gallant games,  
And when they shot for mastery at the butts  
Would make you shoot two arrows still for one,  
And took delight beyond all shots of theirs  
To see how far forth would your great shaft fly,  
Sped for his pleasure ; and my heart grew great  
For my land's sake whereof your strength was made,  
That bore such men for honour ; and the best  
Who served my father Henry in his wars  
Looked reverently upon you horsed at head  
Of your brave hundred men that rode with you,  
And never the great constable of France  
Would speak to you uncovered as to one  
Less than his own place worthy ; and your hand  
Here on these marches hath not lost its praise  
For many as fair a stroke as overthrew  
Between our ranks and the English in mid field  
Lord Rivers' brother, fighting for this land  
That with a tongue as true and serviceable  
You strove in speech to save the freedom of,  
That by no policy it should be subdued  
To a French province ; so for faith and love,  
For valour, wisdom, and for gentleness,  
I wist no Scot had worthier name alive :  
Shall I say now I have no deadlier foe ?

[KIRKALDY *kneels.*

I do not bid you kneel ; speak, and stand up ;



I have no help or comfort of men's knees,  
Nor pleasure of false worship; well I know,  
For all knees bowed, how hearts and hands are bent  
Of mine own men against me. Speak, I pray;  
I am as their servant bound who speak in you  
And open-eared to hear them.

KIRKALDY

From the lords,  
Madam, no word I have to bring but one,  
That from this field they will not part alive  
Without the man in bonds they came to seek;  
Him will they take, or die: but on your part  
They have no thought that is not set to serve  
And do you honour, would but you forsake  
The murderer of your husband, who to you  
Can be no husband, being but lately wed  
To the earl of Huntley's sister and your friend  
By your own mean and favour.

QUEEN (*to BOTHWELL*)

Hold, my lord;  
Let not your man give fire.—Sir, guard yourself;  
See you not where one stands to shoot at you?—  
You will not do me this dishonour, seeing  
I have given my faith he should come safely through  
And go back safe?

•

BOTHWELL

Why, let him then, and say  
That I will yet maintain my proffered cause  
To fight with any that shall challenge me  
Of the king's murder.

## KIRKALDY

Sir, the first was I  
To let you wit myself would fight with you  
Upon that quarrel ; and the first refused,  
As being nor earl nor lord nor mate of yours,  
But a poor baron only ; the like word  
You sent to Tullibardine ; in whose place  
Stands now my lord of Lindsay, if your heart  
Yet fail you not to meet him, as it seems  
Now to grow cold in shadow of his sword  
That hangs against you in the air advanced,  
Darkening your sight and spirit.

BOTHWELL (*to the QUEEN*)

Shall this be said,  
This shame go forth for ever through the world  
Of one that held you by the wedded hand  
And loosed it even for fear ? Now, let me go :  
There is no way now but the best, and this  
You shall no more forbid me : one last time  
I do implore you make not of your love  
The branding-iron that should sign me slave  
In sight of all men always, and on you  
Stamp the vile name of wife to no true man  
But harlot of a coward : who shall spare  
To throw that name and shame on such a love  
As came to such an end as ours shall come  
If here its sun set bloodless, but more red  
With shame than blood could brand it ?

## QUEEN

I have thought  
And set my heart against all chance to come

Of blame or blood that ever shall mark me ;  
Alone I take it on mine only hand,  
And will not yield this one thing up to yours,  
Who have yielded all things else, and this I would,  
But that I may not with my soul alive.  
Sir, if my lords within whose hand I am  
Shall stand content to let my husband go,  
Into their ward will I give up myself  
On what good terms shall please them to call good,  
So he may pass forth freely with such friends  
Of these that have not hands enough to fight  
As shall cleave to him ; I pray you make good speed,  
And let this day have end.

KIRKALDY

Madam, I go.     *[Exit.]*

QUEEN

Do not speak yet : a word should burst my heart ;  
It is a hollow crystal full of tears  
That even a breath might break, and they be spilt  
And life run out with them ; no diamond now,  
But weaker than of wax. Life of that heart,  
There is but one thing hath no remedy,  
Death ; all ills else have end or hope of end  
And time to work their worst before time change ;  
This death has none ; there is all hope shut fast,  
All chance bound up for ever : change nor time  
Can help nor comfort this. You shall not die ;  
I can hold fast no sense of thought but this,  
You shall not.

## BOTHWELL

Well, being sundered, we may live,  
And living meet ; and here to hold the field  
Were but a deadly victory, and my hand  
The mockery of a conqueror's ; we should pass  
No less their prisoners from the field thus won  
Than from these lists defeated. You do well ;  
They dare not urge or strain the power they have  
To bring me prisoner where my witness borne  
Might show them parcel of the deed and guilt  
For which they rise up to lay hold on me  
As upright men of doom, and with pure hands  
To hale me to their judgment. I will go,  
Till good time bring me back ; and you that stay,  
Keep faith with me.

## QUEEN

O, how does one break faith ?  
What are they that are faithless ? by my love,  
I cannot tell or think how I should lie,  
Should live and lie to you that are my faith,  
My soul, my spirit, my very and only God,  
My truth and trust that makes me true of heart,  
My life that feeds and light that lightens me,  
My breath and blood of living. Doth God think  
How I shall be without you ? what strange breath  
Shall my days draw, what strange blood feed my life,  
When this life that is love is gone from them  
And this light lost ? Where shall my true life go,  
And by what far ways follow to find love,  
Fly where love will ? Where will you turn from me ?

## BOTHWELL

Hence will I to Dunbar, and thence again  
There is no way but northward and to ship  
From the north islands ; thence betimes abroad  
By land or sea to lurk and find my life  
Till the wheel turn.

## QUEEN

Ah God, that we were set  
Far out at sea alone by storm and night  
To drive together on one end, and know  
If life or death would give us good or ill  
And night or day receive, and heaven or earth  
Forget us or remember !—He comes back ;  
Here is the end.

## BOTHWELL

But till time change his tune ;  
No more nor further. We shall find our day.

## QUEEN

Have we not found ? I know not what we shall,  
But what hath been and is, and whence they are,  
God knows if now I know not. He is here.

*Re-enter KIRKALDY* °

## KIRKALDY

Madam, the lords return by me this word,  
With them must you go back to Edinburgh  
And there be well entreated as of friends ;

And for the duke, they are with one mind content  
He should part hence for safe and present flight ;  
But here may tarry not or pass not free.  
This is the last word from them by my mouth.

## QUEEN

Ay is it, sir ; the last word I shall hear—  
Last in mine ear for ever : no command  
Nor threat of man shall I give ear to more,  
That have heard this.—Will you not go, my lord ?  
It is not I would hold you.

## BOTHWELL

Then, farewell,  
And keep your word to me. What, no breath more ?  
Keep then this kiss too with the word you gave,  
And with them both my heart and its good hope  
To find time yet for you and me. Farewell. [*Exit.*]

## QUEEN

O God ! God ! God !

Cover my face for me :  
I cannot heave my hand up to my head ;  
Mine arms are broken.

Is he got to horse ?  
I do not think one can die more than this.  
I did not say farewell.

## KIRKALDY

My lord is gone.

## QUEEN

Whom spake I to? I have no woman here.  
All these men's eyes have seen my naked face  
Wrung without tears for anguish, and no hand  
Hide my blind eyes if haply they might weep  
Great drops of blood and fiery.—Laird of Grange,  
I yield myself upon such terms to you  
As in these lords' name you rehearsed to me ;  
Have here my hand for sign.

## KIRKALDY

Upon this hand

I lay the loyal witness of my lips  
For duteous heart and service, and crave leave  
That I may lead your highness through these ranks  
Where at the hill's foot we may find your friends  
Who shall come forth to meet you as their queen  
With all fair reverence.

## QUEEN

Lead me to my lords ;

For one so poor a servant as I am  
Here are too many masters. I could pray,  
But that they lack my service and should chafe  
If I dwelt long upon my prayer and let  
My duty sleep or slacken toward them ; else  
I could pray God to shut up from these lands  
His hand and eye of favour, that no dew  
Might breed herefrom and no bloom break again  
Nor grass be glad for ever ; rain nor sun  
Comfort their cankered face and hardening heart,

Nor hand that tilled or foot that trod of man  
Pass and not curse them. Let me look but once  
Upon this hill whereon till this ninth hour  
Mine enemies' hands have crucified my heart.  
The sun burns yet and the stream runs ; nor eye  
Nor ear have these nor pity. Come, I talk,  
Who had no mind ; God will not heed me ; come.  
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV. *The Camp of the Lords*

MORTON, HUME, LINDSAY, &c.

MORTON

What, is the Frenchman gone ?

LINDSAY

With heavy cheer,  
By this to set sad foot in Edinburgh.

MORTON

There should we be by nightfall ; and you see  
How the day reddens downward, and this hill  
Hath all its west side fiery ; he hath done  
The queen and us small service, to put off  
Her hour of yielding. Look, the last spears left  
Begin to move in sunder ; there he flies,  
The traitor, with his heartless handful backed  
That yet for fear cling to him : and on this side  
Grange leads her down the hill between our horse,  
Who comes not like one captive.



*Enter the QUEEN and KIRKALDY*

QUEEN

Tell me, sirs,  
Are they my doomsmen whom I come to find  
And those your headsman who stand sworded there  
And visored soldier-like, that cry on me  
To burn and slay me ? let me have quick doom,  
And be beyond their crying.

MORTON

Madam, I think  
You cannot fear of us a deadly doom,  
Nor shall you find. Silence those throats, I say.

QUEEN

I have not said I feared ; nor shall there come  
For you that lying breath upon my lips.  
What will ye do with what of me ye have  
If not what these tongues cry for ?

MORTON

Some man ride—  
You, Laird of Grange, with two or three at back,  
And with the flatlong stroke of your good swords  
Smite their mouths dumb. Madam, take you no  
heed ;  
They shall not hurt you.

QUEEN

Sir, no heed have I ;  
I think these common haters shall not hurt

Indeed, nor smite me but with tongues ; 'tis you,  
My good lords only, from whose noble hands  
I look to take my death, who would not lose  
Nor lack this royal office. For my sake  
Do them no hurt, I pray, who are but your mouths  
As you their hands ; I see no choice of you,  
Or them the lesser traitors.

HUME

I will go :

Ride you that way, sir, by their ranks who shout,  
As I this side ; for every way men hear  
How the field rings that all the hills roar back  
With noise of names and cries to burn the whore  
And murderess of her husband : spare no strokes  
To shame or smite them silent.

QUEEN

You, my friends,

Good servants that have care of my good name,  
And loyal lovers—of your love and grace,  
May it please you show me whither I must go  
To find what face of death ? or if yet none,  
And yet ye have not the hardy hearts to slay,  
To uncrown and slay me, I require you then  
Deliver me into my kinsmen's hands  
Of the house of Hamilton, in whose good ward  
I am content to abide men's evil will  
With honourable surety ; which refused,  
Of life nor honour shall I hold me sure  
For all your vows and voices, but esteem  
My life to be as all your honours, dead.

## MORTON

Madam, with mocks you cannot make us mad,  
To bring you to their trustless hands whose ward  
Should be to you but dangerous, and to us  
And all this kingdom's hope in heritage  
And all men's good most mortal. You must go  
With us to Edinburgh, and being made safe  
Abide the judgment there that shall not fall  
By fierce election of men's clamorous mouths  
Whose rage would damn you to the fire-clad death,  
But by their sentence who shall do no wrong,  
If justice may with honour make them sure  
And faith defend from error.

## QUEEN

Ay, my lord ?

I shall be doomed then ere I die, and stand  
Before their face for judgment who should kneel  
To take my sentence as a scourge, and bear  
What brand my tongue set on them ? Nay, ye are  
mad ;

Kings have been slain with violence and red craft  
Or fallen by secret or by popular hands,  
But what man heard yet ever of a king  
Set to the bar of his own men to plead  
For life with rebels' reasons, and wage words  
With whoso dare of all these baser born  
Rise up to judge him ? Surely I shall die,  
Be rent perchance in pieces of men's fangs,  
But of their mouths not sentenced : in fair field  
That only steel that bids a king's neck stoop  
Is the good sword that in a warlike hand  
Makes his head bow and cuts not off his crown

But with the stroke of battle ; who hath seen  
By doom of man a king's head kingdomless  
Bow down to the axe and block ? so base an edge  
Can bite not on such necks. Let me bleed here,  
By their swift hands who ravin for my blood,  
Or be assured how if ye let me live  
I live to see you die for me as dogs :  
Ye shall be hanged on crosses, nailed on rows,  
For birds to rend alive ; ye shall have doom,  
A dog's doom and a traitor's, and the cord  
Strangle the sentence in your labouring lips  
And break the plea that heaves your throat and leaves  
Your tongue thrust forth to blacken ; ye shall wage  
Words and try causes with the worms and flies  
Till they leave bare your bones to sun and wind  
As shame shall leave your titles. Was it you  
[To LINDSAY.

That were to fight before me with my lord ?  
Give me your hand, sir ; by this hand of yours  
I swear for this thing yet to have your head,  
And so thereof assure you.

## MORTON

Bid the camp  
Strike and set forth behind us. Sirs, to horse ;  
And, madam, be not yet so great of speech  
As utterly to outwear your spirit of strength  
With pain and passion that can bear no fruit  
But wind and wrath and barren bitterness.  
Vex not yourself more than your foes would vex,  
Of whom we would be none that ride with you  
From them to guard you that would lay red hands  
On you yet faint and weak from this fierce day.

## QUEEN

My body and head wax faint, but not my heart ;  
I have yet there fire enough for all of you,  
To burn your strengths up that my feebler limbs  
Can make my heart not yield to nor bow down,  
Nor fear put out its fires. Come, worthy lords,  
And lead me to my loving town again  
That bears your heads not yet above its gates  
Where I shall see them festering if I live. [*Exeunt*

SCENE V. *Edinburgh. A Room in the Provost's  
House*

*Enter MAITLAND and PROVOST*

## MAITLAND

Are the gates fast?

## PROVOST

Ay ; but the street yet seethes  
With ebb and flow of fighting faces thronged  
And crush of onset following on her heel  
Where she came in and whence at her own call  
You drove them off her ; and above the ranks  
Flaps the flag borne before her as she came  
Wrought with the dead king's likeness ; and their cry  
Is yet to burn or drown her. It were but  
A manlike mercy now for men to show  
That she should have some woman's hand of hers  
To tend her fainting who should be nigh dead  
With fear and lack of food and weariness.

## MAITLAND

Nay, if she die not till she die for fear,  
She must outlive man's memory ; twice or thrice  
As she rode hither with that sable flag  
Blown overhead whereon the dead man lay  
Painted, and by him beneath a garden tree  
His young child kneeling, with soft hands held up  
And the word underwritten of his prayer  
*Judge and avenge my cause, O Lord*—she seemed  
At point to swoon, being sick with two days' fast,  
And with faint fingers clung upon the rein  
And gaped as one athirst with foodless lips  
And fair head fainting ; but for very scorn  
Was straightway quickened and uplift of heart,  
And smote us with her eyes again, and spoke  
No weaker word but of her constant mind  
To hang and crucify, when time should be,  
These now her lords and keepers ; so at last  
Beneath these walls she came in with the night,  
So pressed about with foes that man by man  
We could but bring her at a foot's pace through  
Past Kirk of Field between the roaring streets,  
Faint with no fear, but hunger and great rage,  
With all men's wrath as thunder at her heel,  
And all her fair face foul with dust and tears,  
But as one fire of eye and cheek that shone  
With heat of fiery heart and unslaked will  
That took no soil of fear.

## PROVOST

What shall be done  
When sentence shall pass on her ?

MAITLAND

By my will

She shall not die nor lose her royal name,  
Wherein the council only shall bear rule  
And take to its own hand the care to wreak  
On her false lord now fled our general wrong,  
Who being but overtaken of its sword  
Shall be divorced at once from her and life.

PROVOST

But this shall not content the common will,  
Nor theirs who bind and loose it with their tongues  
And cry now for her blood ; the town is loud  
With women's voices keener than of men  
To call for judgment on her and swift death  
Sharp as their anger.

MAITLAND

Ay, the time is mad

With noise of preachers and the feminine spleen  
That of mere rage and blind mobility  
Barks in brute heat for blood ; but on these tongues  
The state yet hangs not, nor the general weal  
Is swayed but by the violent breath of these.  
Here sits she safe.

PROVOST

I would I knew it ; her mood  
Is as a wind that blows upon a fire,  
And drives her to and fro : she will not eat,  
But rages here and there and cries again  
On us for traitors, on her friends for help,

On God for comfort of her cause and crown  
That of his foes and hers is violated,  
And will not stint her clamours nor take rest  
For prayer nor bidding.

MAITLAND

I will speak with her  
Ere I go hence ; though she were mild of mood,  
The task were hard with Knox for opposite  
To bend the council to such policy  
As might assure her but of life, which thus  
She whets the weapon in his tongue to take. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE VI. *Another Room in the same*

*The QUEEN and an Attendant*

QUEEN

Wilt thou be true ? but if thou have not heart,  
Yet do not, being too young to sell man's blood,  
Betray my letter to mine enemies' hands  
Where it should be a sword to smite me with ;  
If thou lack heart, I say, being but a boy,  
Swear not and break thine oath ; but if thou have,  
Thou shalt not ask for this mine errand done  
The thing I will not give thee. At Dunbar  
Bring but this letter to my husband's hand ;  
Spare for no speed ; if it were possible,  
I would it might be with him ere day dawn  
On me condemned of men. I have no hope,



Thou seest, but in thee only ; thou art young  
And mean of place, but be thou good to me  
And thou shalt sit above thy masters born  
And nobles grey in honour. Wilt thou go ?  
Have here mine only jewel, and my faith  
That I plight to thee, when my hand may choose,  
To give thee better gifts. Haste, and so thrive  
As I by thee shall. [*Exit Attendant.*]

Though thou play me false,  
Thou dost no more than God has done with me  
And all men else before thee : yet I could not  
But write this worthless one word of my love  
Though I should die for writing it in vain,  
And he should never read it.

*Enter MAITLAND*

Come you not  
To tell me of my commons and your friends  
That by their will despite you I must die ?  
It were no stranger now than all things are  
That fall as on me dreaming.

MAITLAND

Madam, no ;  
I come to plead with you for your own life,  
Which wrath and violent mood would cast away.

QUEEN

What is my life to any man or me  
As ye have made it ? If ye seek not that,  
Why have ye torn me from my husband's hand,

With whom ye know that I would live and die  
With all content that may be in the world?

## MAITLAND

For your own honour have we sundered you ;  
You know not him, who late writ word—myself  
Can show this letter—to the Lady Jane,  
She was his wife and you his concubine,  
No more but sport and scandal in his sheets,  
And loved for use but as a paramour  
And for his ends to rise and by your lips  
Be kissed into a kingdom ; and each week  
Since they were first but as in show divorced  
And but of craft divided, on some days  
Have they held secret commerce to your shame  
As wedded man and wife.

## QUEEN

There is one thing  
That I would ask of even such friends as you—  
To turn me with my lord adrift at sea  
And make us quit of all men.

## MAITLAND

For yourself,  
You drive on no less danger here of wreck,  
Seeing for your life if England take no care  
France will nor strike nor speak ; and had you not  
In your own kindly kingdom yet some friends  
Whose hearts are better toward you, these wot well  
You had none left you helpful in the world.  
Yet what we may will I and all these do

To serve you in this strait ; so for this night  
Let not your peril, which can breed not fear,  
For that breed anger in you ; and farewell. [*Exit.*

## QUEEN

None but such friends ? O yet my living lord,  
O still my comfort, hadst thou none but me  
As I save thee have no man, we would go  
Hand fast in hand to dreadless death, and see  
With such clear eyes as once our marriage-bed  
Fire, or the sword's light lifted to make end  
Of that one life on both our lips that laughed  
To think he could not sunder them who smote,  
Nor change our hearts who chilled them ; we would  
    kiss,  
Laugh, and lie down, and sleep ; but here in bonds  
I will not tamely like a dumb thing die  
That gives its blood and speaks not. If I find  
No faith in all this people, yet my curse  
Shall through this casement cry in all their ears  
That are made hard against me.—Ho there, you,  
All that pass by, your queen am I that call,  
Have I no friend of all you to turn back  
The swords that point on this bare breast, the hands  
That grasp and hale me by the hair to death,  
By this discrowned rent hair that wore too soon  
The kingdom's weight of all this land in gold?  
Have I no friend ? no friend ?

## VOICE WITHOUT

Ay, here was one ;

Know you yet him ? Raise up the banner there,

That she may look upon her lord, and take  
Comfort.

A WOMAN

What, was not this that kneels the child  
Which hung once at that harlot's breast now bare  
And should have drunk death from its deadly milk?  
Hide it for shame; bind up the wanton hair,  
Cover the poisonous bosom; here is none  
To kiss the print of that adulterer's head  
Which last lay on it.

ANOTHER VOICE

Whither is he flown,  
Whose amorous lips were bloody, and left red  
The shameless cheek they fed on as with shame?  
Where is your swordsman at your back to guard  
And make your sin strut kinglike? where his hand  
That made this dead man's child kneel fatherless  
And plead with God against you for his blood?  
Where is your king-killer?

QUEEN

The day shall be  
That I will make this town a fire, and slake  
The flame with blood of all you: there shall stand  
No mark of man, no stone of these its walls,  
To witness what my wrath made ruin of  
That turned it first to smoke, and then put out  
With all your blood its ashes.

*Enter PROVOST*

Hear you, sir,  
How we are handled of our townsfolk there,  
Being yet in ward of you? but by my head,  
If now by force it fall not, you as these  
Shall buy this of me bloodily, and first  
Shall bleed of all whose lives will pay not me.

## PROVOST

Madam, as you desire to see that day,  
Contain yourself; this flame whereon you blow  
Will fasten else untimely on your hand  
And leave it harmless toward us. I beseech you,  
Though but for hate of us and hope to hurt,  
Eat, and take rest.

## QUEEN

I will not; what are ye  
That I should care for hate of you to live  
Who care not for the love's sake of my life?  
If I shall die here in your hateful hands,  
In God's I put my cause, as into them  
I yield the spirit that dares all enemies yet  
By force to take it from me. Die or live  
I needs must at their bidding; but to sleep,  
Eat, drink, weep, laugh, speak or keep silence, these  
They shall not yet command me till I die. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VII. *The High Street**A crowd of* CITIZENS

FIRST CITIZEN

Who says she shall not die ?

SECOND CITIZEN

Even he that stands  
First in this city, Morton ; by his doom,  
Death shall not pass upon her.

FIRST CITIZEN

Will he say it?  
Yet is this man not all the tongue or hand  
That Scotland has to speak or smite with.

THIRD CITIZEN

Nay,  
When he so spake against their honest voice  
Who called for judgment, one arose that said—  
I know not who, but one that spake for God—  
That he who came between God's sword and her  
Should as a stay'er of justice by the sword  
Be stricken of God's justice.

FIRST CITIZEN

What said he ?

## THIRD CITIZEN

No word, but frowned ; and in his eye and cheek  
There sprang a fire and sank again, as 'twere  
For scorn that anger should have leave to speak,  
Though silently ; but Maitland writhed his lip  
And let his teeth grin doglike, and between  
There shot some snarling word that mocked at God,  
And at the servants of his wrath, who wait  
To see his will done on her, and men's hands  
Made ministers to set it forth so broad  
That none might pass and read not.

## SECOND CITIZEN

Why, by this

Part hangs of it already in men's sight ;  
I have word here from Dunbar of one that was  
An officer of Bothwell's, and alive  
Laird of Blackadder, whom they seized at sea  
Flying from death to deathward, and brought back  
To be nigh rent in pieces of their hands  
Who haled him through the streets to hang, and left  
Not half a man unbroken or unbruised  
To feel the grip o' the gallows.

## FIRST CITIZEN

They did well ;

Shall we do worse, that have within our hand  
The heart and head of all this evil, her  
By whom all guilt looks guiltless till she die  
A whore's death or a murderer's, burn or drown,  
And leave more free the common doom of man  
To pass on lesser sins ? While she doth live,

How should it speak for shame to bid men die  
For what sin done soever, who might say  
She lives and laughs yet in God's face and eye  
And finds on earth no judgment as do these  
Whose bloodiest hands are whiter than her soul?  
Let her die first.

## THIRD CITIZEN

Ay shall she, if God put  
Upon those lips that never lacked it yet  
His fire to burn men's hearts, and make that tongue  
His sword that hath been ever. Yesternight  
Came Knox to Edinburgh, and here should speak  
By this among us of the doom to fall  
On us or her, that if it bruise her not  
Must glance aside against us.

## SECOND CITIZEN

He is here.  
Draw nigh, but make no noise.

*Enter* JOHN KNOX

## FIRST CITIZEN

Nay, all the press  
Heaves round about him silent.

c

## OTHERS

Sirs, give place ;  
Make way for Master Knox to stand and speak  
Here in your midst ; here is it higher ; give way.  
Make room to hear him. Peace there, and stand still.



JOHN KNOX

What word is this that ye require of man ?  
Ye that would hear me, what speech heard of mine  
Should lift your hearts up if they sit not high,  
If they lack life, should quicken ? for this day  
Ye know not less than I know that the Lord  
Hath given his enemy to you for a prey,  
His judgment for a fire ; what need have ye,  
Or he what need of other tongues to speak  
Than this which burns all ears that hear on earth  
The blast of this day's justice blown in heaven—  
As where is he that hears not ? In your hand  
Lies now the doom of God to deal, and she  
Before your face to abide it, in whose mouth  
His name was as a hissing ; and had I  
The tongues in mine of angels, and their might,  
What other word or mightier should I seek  
Than this to move you ? or should ye wax cold  
What fuel should I find out to kindle you ?  
If God ye hear not, how shall ye hear me ?  
Or if your eyes be sealed to know not her,  
If she be fit to live or no, can I  
With words unseal them ? None so young of you  
But hath long life enough to understand  
And reason to record what he hath seen  
Of hers and of God's dealings mutually  
Since she came in. Then was her spirit made  
soft,  
Her words as oil, and with her amorous face  
She caught men's eyes to turn them where she would,  
And with the strong sound of her name of queen  
Made their necks bend ; that even of God's own men  
There were that bade refuse her not her will,

Deny not her, fair woman and great queen,  
Her natural freedom born, to give God praise  
What way she would, and pray what prayers ; though  
these

Be as they were, to God abominable  
And venomous to men's souls. So came there back  
The cursed thing cast forth of us, and so  
Out of her fair face and imperious eyes  
Lightened the light whereby men walk in hell.  
And I that sole stood out and bade not let  
The lightning of this curse come down on us  
And fly with feet as fire on all winds blown  
To burn men's eyes out that beheld God's face,  
That being long blind but now gat sight, and saw  
And praised him seeing—I that then spake and said,  
Ten thousand men here landed of our foes  
Were not so fearful to me on her side  
As one mass said in Scotland—that withstood  
The man to his face I loved, her father's son,  
Then mastered by the pity of her, and made  
Through that good mind not good—who then but I  
Was taxed of wrongful will, and for hard heart  
Miscalld of men? And now, sirs, if her prayer  
Were just and reasonable, and unjust I  
That bade shut ears against it—if the mass  
Hath brought forth innocent fruit, and in this land  
Wherein she came to stablish it again  
Hath stablished peace with honour—if in her  
It hath been found no seed of shame, and she  
That loved and served it seem now in men's sight  
No hateful thing nor fearful—if she stand  
Such a queen proven as should prove honourable  
The rule of women, and in her that thing  
Be shown forth good that was called evil of me,

Blest and not curst—then have I sinned, and they  
That would have crossed me would have crossed not  
God :

Whereof now judge ye. Hath she brought with her  
Peace, or a sword? and since her incoming  
Hath the land sat in quiet, and the men  
Seen rest but for one year? or came not in  
Behind her feet, right at her back, and shone  
Above her crowned head as a fierier crown,  
Death, and about her as a raiment wrapt  
Ruin? and where her foot was ever turned  
Or her right hand was pointed, hath there fallen  
No fire, no cry burst forth of war, no sound  
As of a blast blown of an host of men  
For summons of destruction? Hath God shown  
For sign she had found grace in his sight, and we  
For her sake favour, while she hath reigned on us,  
One hour of good, one week of rest, one day?  
Or hath he sent not for an opposite sign  
Dissensions, wars, rumours of wars, and change,  
Flight and return of men, terror with power,  
Triumph with trembling? Hath one foot stood fast,  
One head not bowed, one face not veiled itself,  
One hand not hidden? Was this once or twice  
That ye beheld, this brief while of her reign,  
Strong men one day make mouths at God, the next  
Lie where his foes lie fallen? or since she came  
Have ye seen raised up of them and cast down  
But one or two that served her? Which of these,  
Which of them all that looked on her and loved,  
And men spake well of them, and pride and hope  
Were as their servants—which of all them now  
Shall men speak well of? How fared he the first  
Hailed of his own friends and elect her lord,

Who gave her kinsmen heart and godless hope  
By him to reign in her and wield this land,  
Yet once with me took counsel and sought grace,  
And suddenly God left him, and he stood  
Brain-smitten, with no bride-bed now nor throne  
To conquer, but go senseless to his grave,  
The broken-witted Hamilton—what end,  
Think ye, had this man, or what hope and hap  
The next whose name met on men's lips with hers  
And ballads mourned him in his love's sight slain,  
Gordon, that in the dawn of her dark day  
Rose northward as a young star fiery red,  
Flashed in her face, and fell, for her own breath  
Quenched him? What good thing gat they for her  
sake,

These that desired her, yet were mighty lords,  
Great in account of great men? So they twain  
Perished; and on men meaner far than these  
When this queen looked, how fared they? folk that  
came

With wiles and songs and sins from oversea,  
With harping hands and dancing feet, and made  
Music and change of praises in her ear—  
White rose out of the south, star out of France,  
Light of men's eyes and love! yea, verily,  
Red rose out of the pit, star out of hell,  
Fire of men's eyes and burning! for the first  
Was caught as in a chamber snare and fell  
Smiling, and died with *Farewell, the most fair*  
*And the most cruel princess in the world—*  
With suchlike psalms go suchlike souls to God  
Naked—and in his blood she washed her feet  
Who sat and saw men spill it; and this reward  
Had this man of his dancing. For the next,

On him ye know what hand was last year laid,  
David, the close tongue of the Pope, the hand  
That held the key of subtle and secret craft  
As of his viol, and tuned all strings of state  
With cunning finger ; not the foot o' the king  
Before God's ark when Michal mocked at him  
Danced higher than this man's heart for confidence  
To bring from Babylon that ark again  
Which he that touches, he shall surely die,  
But not the death of Uzzah ; for thereon  
God's glory rests not, but the shadow of death,  
And dead men's bones within it : yet his trust  
Was to lift up again and to relume  
The tabernacle of Moloch, and the star  
Of Remphan, figures which our fathers made,  
That such as he might go before, and play  
On timbrels and on psalteries and on harps,  
On cornets and on cymbals ; and the Lord  
Brake him ; and she being wroth at God took thought  
How they that saw might call his place of death  
The breach of David, and her heart waxed hot  
Till she should make a breach upon his foes  
As God on him, and with a dire new name  
And a new memory quite put out that name  
And memory of his slaying ; yea, all this land,  
That hath seen evil of many men before  
And sins of many years, hath seen till now  
No sin as hers, nor on her forefathers  
Whose hands were red and their hearts hard hath seen  
The note of such an evil as in her heart  
Became a fire conceiving, and brought forth  
The deed that in her hand was as a sword  
New tempered in that fire ; for no such deed  
Was this as all theirs who play false or slay,

Take gifts for whoredom or lay snares to kill,  
But she gave gifts to hire her lover's knife  
That it might pierce her husband ; even this land,  
This earth whereof our living limbs are made,  
This land renewed of God, this earth redeemed,  
With all souls born therein to worship him  
That call it mother, was the hire she gave  
To fee the adulterer's hand when it should rise  
Against her lord to slay him ; yea, all of you,  
And each part of this kingdom, and each man  
That but draws breath within her range of reign,  
Were parcel of this hire, as counted coins  
To make the sum up of her goodly gift.  
And he that of their hands was bought and sold,  
Her wedded husband, that had bowed his head  
Before her worshipped idol—think ye not  
That by her hand God gave him all his wage  
Who was a less thing in his eyes than she  
And viler than her service ? for the fire  
Fell not from heaven that smote him, yet not less  
Was kindled of God's wrath than of man's hate  
And in a woman's craft his will put forth  
To make her sin his judgment ; but of these,  
The slain and slayer, the spoiler and the spoiled,  
That each have lain down by her wedded side,  
Which will ye say hath slept within her bed  
A sleep more cursed, and from more evil dreams  
Found a worse waking ? he that with a blast  
Which rent the loud night as a cry from hell  
Was blown forth darkling from her sheets, or he  
That shared and soiled them till this day whereon  
God casts him out upon the track of Cain  
To flee for ever with uncleansed red hands  
And seek and find not where in the waste world

To hide the wicked writing on his brow  
Till God rain death upon him? for his foot,  
Be sure, shall find no rest, his eye no sleep,  
His head no covert and his heart no hope,  
His soul no harbour and his face no light,  
But as a hound the wolf that bleeds to death  
God's wrath shall hunt him through the dark, and fear  
Shall go before him as a cloud by day,  
By night a fire, but comfort not his head  
By day with shadow, nor with shine by night  
Guide lest his foot be dashed against a stone,  
But in fair heaven before the morning's face  
Make his air thick with thunder, and put out  
All lamplike eyes of stars that look on him  
Till he lie down blind in the dust and die.  
Or if God haply give his lightnings charge  
They hurt him not, and bid his wind pass by  
And the stroke spare him of the bolted cloud,  
Then seeing himself cast out of all that live  
But not of death accepted, everywhere  
An alien soul and shelterless from God,  
He shall go mad with hate of his own soul,  
Of God and man and life and death, and live  
A loathlier life and deadlier than the worm's  
That feeds on death, and when it rots from him  
Curse God and die. Such end have these that loved ;  
And she that was beloved, what end shall she ?  
What think ye yet would God have done with her,  
Who puts her in our hand to smite or spare  
That hath done all this wickedness? for these,  
What were they but as shadows in the sun  
Cast by her passing, or as thoughts that fled  
Across her mind of evil, types and signs  
Whereby to spell the secret of her soul

Writ by her hand in blood? What power had they,  
What sense, what spirit, that was not given of her,  
Or what significance or shape of life  
Their act or purpose, formless else and void,  
Save as her will and present force of her,  
Gave breath to them and likeness? None of these  
Hath done or suffered evil save for her,  
Who was the spring of each man's deed or doom  
And root for each of death, and in his hand  
The sword to die by and the sword to slay.  
Shall this be left then naked in the world  
For him that will to stab our peace to death?  
What blood is this drips from the point, what sign,  
What scripture is enamelled on the blade?  
Lo, this fair steel forged only to divide  
This land from truth and cut her soul in twain,  
To cleave the cords in sunder that hold fast  
Our hope to heaven and tie our trust to God,  
Here by the hilt we hold it, and well know  
That if we break not, this now blunted edge  
Being newly ground and sharpened of men's hands  
That watch if ours will yet loose hold of it  
Shall pierce our own hearts through. Ay, be ye sure,  
If ye bid murder and adultery live,  
They live not stingless; not a Scot that breathes,  
No man of you nor woman, but hath part  
In each her several sin and punishment  
That ye take off from her. But what are these  
That with their 'baths or arms would fence her round  
And hide her from God's lightnings? Know they not,  
—Or if they know not, will ye too be blind?—  
What end that Lord who hath bowed so many a head,  
So many and mighty, of those her former friends,  
Hath power to make of these men? Shall they stand,



Because they have done God service while they would,  
And cease to serve him? or their good deeds past  
Who served not God as Job forsooth for nought  
Sustain their feet from falling? Strength nor craft,  
Nor praise nor fear nor faith nor love of men,  
Shall be for buckler to them, nor his name  
A helm of vantage for the Douglas' head  
If he make stiff against the yoke of God  
Too proud a neck, that for the curb cast off  
May feel the weight and edge that iron hath,  
To check high minds and chasten; nor his wit  
Nor subtle tongue shall be for Lethington  
But as a pointless and unfeathered shaft  
Shot heavenward without hurt, that falls again  
In the archer's eye to pierce it; and his lips  
That were so large of mockery when God spake,  
By present organ of his works and wrath  
And tongueless sound of justice audible,  
Shall drink the poison of their words again  
And their own mocks consume them; and the mouth  
That spat on Christ, now pleading for his foes,  
Be stricken dumb as dust. Then shall one say,  
Seeing these men also smitten, as ye now  
Seeing them that bled before to do her good,  
God is not mocked; and ye shall surely know  
What men were these and what man he that spake  
The things I speak now prophesying, and said  
That if ye spare to shed her blood for shame,  
For fear or pity of her great name or face,  
God shall require of you the innocent blood  
Shed for her fair face' sake, and from your hands  
Wring the price forth of her bloodguiltiness.  
Nay, for ye know it, nor have I need again  
To bring it in your mind if God ere now

Have borne me witness ; in that dreary day  
When men's hearts failed them for pure grief and fear  
To see the tyranny that was, and rule  
Of this queen's mother, where was no light left  
But of the fires wherein his servants died,  
I bade those lords that clave in heart to God  
And were perplexed with trembling and with tears  
Lift up their hearts, and fear not ; and they heard  
What some now hear no more, the word I spake  
Who have been with them, as their own souls know,  
In their most extreme danger ; Cowper Moor,  
Saint Johnston, and the Craggs of Edinburgh,  
Are recent in my heart ; yea, let these know,  
That dark and dolorous night wherein all they  
With shame and fear were driven forth of this town  
Is yet within my mind ; and God forbid  
That ever I forget it. What, I say,  
Was then my exhortation, and what word  
Of all God ever promised by my mouth  
Is fallen in vain, they live to testify  
Of whom not one that then was doomed to death  
Is perished in that danger ; and their foes,  
How many of these hath God before their eyes  
Plague-stricken with destruction ! lo the thanks  
They render him, now to betray his cause  
Put in their hands to stablish ; even that God's  
That kept them all the darkness through to see  
Light, and the way that some now see no more,  
But are gone after light of the fen's fire  
And walk askant in slippery ways ; but ye  
Know if God's hand have ever when I spake  
Writ liar upon me, or with adverse proof  
Turned my free speech to shame ; for in my lips  
He put a word, and knowledge in my heart,

When I was fast bound of his enemies' hands  
An oarsman on their galleys, and beheld  
From off the sea whereon I sat in chains  
The walls wherein I knew that I there bound  
Should one day witness of him ; and this pledge  
Hath God redeemed not ? Nay then, in God's name,  
If that false word fell unfulfilled of mine,  
Heed ye not now nor hear me when I say  
That for this woman's sake shall God cut off  
The hand that spares her as the hand that shields,  
And make their memory who take part with her  
As theirs who stood for Baal against the Lord  
With Ahab's daughter ; for her reign and end  
Shall be like Athaliah's, as her birth  
Was from the womb of Jezebel, that slew  
The prophets, and made foul with blood and fire  
The same land's face that now her seed makes foul  
With whoredoms and with witchcrafts ; yet they say  
Peace, where is no peace, while the adulterous blood  
Feeds yet with life and sin the murderous heart  
That hath brought forth a wonder to the world  
And to all time a terror ; and this blood  
The hands are clean that shed, and they that spare  
In God's just sight spotted as foul as Cain's.  
If then this guilt shall cleave to you or no,  
And to your children's children, for her sake,  
Choose ye ; for God needs no man that is loth  
To serve him, and no word but his own work  
To bind and loose their hearts who hear and see  
Such things as speak what I lack words to say.

## FIRST CITIZEN

She shall not live.

## SECOND CITIZEN

If by their mouths to-day  
She be set free from death, then by our hands  
She dies to-morrow.

## VOICES IN THE CROWD

Nay, to fire with her !  
Fire for the murderess ! cast her bones in the lake !  
Burn, burn and drown ! She shall not live to-night.

SCENE VIII. *A Room in the Provost's House*

*The* QUEEN, ATHOL, and MORTON

## QUEEN

I will not part from hence ; here will I see  
What man dare do upon me.

## ATHOL

Hear you not  
How the cry thickens for your blood ? this night  
Scarce has time left to save you.

## QUEEN

I will die.

## MORTON

Madam, your will is no more now the sword  
That cuts all knots in sunder : you must live,

And thank the force that would not give you leave  
To give your foes the blood they seek to spill.  
Here every hour's is as an arrow's flight  
Winged for your heart ; if in these clamorous walls  
You see this darkness by the sun cast out,  
You will not see his light go down alive.

## QUEEN

What men are ye then, that have made my life  
Safe with your oaths, that walled it round with words,  
Fenced it with faith and fortified it with air  
Made of your breaths and honours ? When ye swore,  
I knew the lie's weight on your lips, and took  
My life into mine hand ; I had no thought  
To live or ride among you but to death,  
And whither ye have led me to what end  
Nor I nor God knows better than I knew  
Then when ye swore me safe ; for then as now  
I knew your faith was lighter than my life,  
And my life's weight a straw's weight in the wind  
Of your blown vows. Pledge me your faith to this,  
That I shall die to-night if I go forth  
And if I stay live safe, and I will go  
In trust to live, being here assured to die.

## MORTON

We swore to save you as you swore again  
To cast the traitor from you, and divorce  
Your hand for ever from the blood on his ;  
And with that hand you wrote to him last night  
Vows of your love and constant heart till death  
As his true wife to serve and cleave to him.  
The boy that should have borne your letter lacked

Faith to be trusty to your faithless trust,  
And put it in our hand.

QUEEN

Why, so I thought ;  
I knew there was no soul between these walls  
Of child or man that had more faith than ye  
Who stand their noblest ; nor shall one soul breathe,  
If here ye put not out my present life,  
When I come back, that shall not burn on earth  
Ere hell take hold of it.

MORTON

It is well seen,  
Madam, that fear nor danger can pluck forth  
Your tongue that strikes men mad with love or scorn,  
Taunted or tempted ; yet it shall not wrest  
Death from men's hands untimely ; what was sworn,  
That you should live, shall stand ; and that it may,  
To-night must you part hence ; this lord and I  
Will bring you through to Holyrood afoot  
And be your warders from the multitude  
As you pass forth between us ; thence to Leith,  
And there shall you take water and ere dawn  
Touch at Burntisland, whence some twenty miles  
Shall bear you to Lochleven and safe guard  
On the Fife border ; he that has your charge  
Is one not trusted more than tried of us,  
Sir William Douglas, in whose mother's ward  
At Kinross there shall you abide what end  
God shall ordain of troubles : at this need  
No kindlier guard or trustier could secure  
The life we pluck out of the popular mouth  
That roars agape to rend it. You must go.

## QUEEN

Must I not too go barefoot? being your queen,  
Ye do me too much grace : I should be led  
In bonds between you, with my written sins  
Pinned to my forehead, and my naked shame  
Wrapt in a shameful sheet : so might I pass,  
If haply I might pass at all alive  
Forth of my people's justice, to salute  
With seemly show of penance her chaste eyes  
Whom ye have chosen for guard upon her queen  
And daughter of the king her paramour,  
Whose son being called my brother I must call,  
Haply, to win her favour and her son's  
And her good word with him as mediatrix,  
My father's harlot mother. Verily,  
Ye are worthy guardians of fair fame, and friends  
Fit to have care of reputation, men  
That take good heed of honour ; and the state  
That hath such counsellors to comfort it  
Need fear no shame nor stain of such reproach  
As makes it shrink when with her lords' good will,  
Advised of all tongues near her and approved,  
A queen may wed the worthiest born of men  
Her subjects, and a warrior take to wife  
One that being widowed of his hand and help  
Were such a thing as I am. From my lord  
I held my kingdom ; now my hand lacks his,  
What queen am I, and what slaves ye, that throng  
And threat my life with vassals, to make vile  
Its majesty foregone with abject fear  
Of my most abject? yet though I lack might  
Save of a woman friendless and in bonds,  
My name and place yet lack not, nor the state

And holy magic that God clothes withal  
The naked word of king or queen, and keeps  
In his own shadow, hallowed in his hand,  
Such heads unarmed as mine, that men may smite  
But no man can dishallow. In this faith,  
Not to your faith I yield myself for fear,  
But gladly to that God's who made of me  
What ye nor no man mightier shall unmake,  
Your queen and mistress. Lead me through my  
streets

Whose stones are tongues now crying for my blood  
To my dead fathers' palace, that hath oped  
On many kings and traitors ; it may be  
I shall not see these walls and gates again  
That cast me out ; but if alive or dead  
I come back ever to require my part  
And place among my fathers, on my tomb  
Or on my throne shall there stand graved for aye  
The living word of this day's work and that  
Which is to wreak me on it : and this town  
Whence I go naked in mine enemies' hands  
Shall be the flame to light men's eyes that read  
What was endured and what revenged of me.



## ACT V

*THE QUEEN*

TIME : FROM JULY 20, 1567, TO MAY 16, 1568

SCENE I. *Holyrood*MORTON *and* MAITLAND

MORTON

I KNOW not yet if we did well to lay  
 No public note of murder on the queen  
 In this our proclamation that sets forth  
 But the bare justice of our cause, and right  
 We had to move against her ; while her act  
 Stands yet unproven and seen but by surmise,  
 Though all but they that will not seem to know  
 May know the form and very life of it,  
 She hath a sword against us and a stay  
 In the English hearts and envious hands that wait  
 To strike at us, and take her name to gild  
 And edge the weapon of their evil will  
 Who only are our enemies, and stand  
 Sole friends of hers on earth ; for France, we see,  
 Will be no screen nor buckler for her, though  
 Fire were now lit to burn her body, or steel

Ground sharp to shear her neck : from Catherine's  
mouth

Had Murray not assurance, and from him  
Have we not word that France will stir no foot  
To save or spill her blood? England alone  
By her new-lighted envoy sends rebuke  
Made soft and mixed with promise and with pledge  
Of help and comfort to her against our part  
Who by this messenger imperiously  
Are taxed and threatened as her traitors ; this  
Must we now answer with a brow as free  
And tongue as keen, seeing how his queen in him  
Desires the charge and wardship of our prince  
Which we must nowise grant.

MAITLAND

For fear's sake, no,  
Nor for her threats, which rather may pluck on  
More present peril, of more fiery foot,  
To the queen's life ; yet surer might we stand  
Having the crown's heir safe and girt about  
With foreign guard in a strange land, than here  
Rocked in the roar of factions, his frail head  
Pillowed on death and danger ; which once crushed,  
And that thin life cut off, what hand puts forth  
To take the crown up by successive right  
But theirs that would even now dip violent hand  
In the dear heart's blood of their kinswoman,  
That it might take this kingdom by the throat  
When she were slain ? and rather by our mean  
Would they procure her slaying than by their own  
Make swift the death which they desire for her,  
And from our hands with craft would draw it down  
By show of friendship to her and threat of arms

That menace us with mockery and false fear  
Of her deliverance by their swords, whose light  
Being drawn and shining in our eyes should scare  
Our hearts with doubt of what might fall if she  
Stood by their help rekingdomed, and impel  
Even in that fear our hands to spill her blood  
That lag too long behind their wish, who wait  
Till seeing her slain of us they may rise up  
Heirs of her cause and lineage, and reclaim  
By right of blood and justice and revenge  
The crown that drops from Stuart to Hamilton  
With no more let or thwart than a child's life  
Whose length should be their pleasure's : and with  
these

Against our cause will England league herself  
If yet the queen live prisoner of our hands  
And these her kin draw swords for her ; but they,  
Though England know not of it, nor have eye  
To find their drift, would mix their cause with ours,  
If from the queen's head living we should pluck  
The royal office, and as next in blood  
Instate them regents ; who would reign indeed  
Rather by death's help if they might, and build  
On her child's grave and hers their regency,  
Than rule by deputation ; yet at need  
Will be content by choice or leave of us  
To take the delegated kingdom up  
And lack but name of king : which being installed  
I doubt they think not long to lack, or live  
Its patient proxies ever. So the land,  
Shaken and sundered, looks from us to these,  
From these again to usward, and hears blown  
Upon the light breath of the doubtful hour  
Rumours of fear which swell men's hearts with wrath

To hear of southern wars and counsels hatched  
That think with fright to shrink them up, and bind  
Their blood's course fast with threats. Let England  
know,

Her menace that makes cold no vein of ours  
May heat instead the centre and the core  
Of this land's pulse with fire, and in that flame  
The life we seek not and the crown it wears  
Consume together. France will rest our friend  
Whether the queen find grace to live in bonds  
Or bleed beneath our judgment ; he that comes  
On errand thence to reconcile with us  
Her kin that stand yet on the adverse part  
Hath but in charge to do her so much good  
As with our leave he may, and break no bond  
That holds us firm in friendship ; if we will,  
She may be held in ward of France, and live  
Within the bound there of a convent wall  
Till death redeem her ; but howe'er he speed  
Who hath commission with what power he may  
To make of our twain factions one such league  
As may stand fast and perfect friend with France,  
And in what wise by grace of us he may  
To do our prisoner service and entreat  
That grace to drop upon her, this main charge  
He needs must keep, to hold allied in one  
Scotland and France, and let our hand not plight  
Fresh faith instead with England ; so for us  
From France looks forth no danger though she die,  
For her no help ; and these void English threats,  
That bring no force to back them but their own  
And find not us unfriended, do but blow  
The embers that her life still treads upon  
Which being enkindled shall devour it.

MORTON

Ay,

And each day leaves them redder from the breath  
That through the land flies clamorous for her blood  
From lips which boast to bear upon them laid  
The live coal burning of the word that God  
Gives them to speak against her ; the south towns  
Are full of tongues that cry on our delay  
To purge the land plague-stricken with her life ;  
He first who never feared the face of man,  
John Knox, and Craig his second, fill men's ears  
With words as arrows edged and winged to slay ;  
And all the wide-mouthed commons, and more loud  
The women than their men, stretch their shrill throats  
With cries for judgment on her : and herself,  
As parcel of the faction for her death,  
Takes part with them against her friends, and  
swears

To the English envoy who was charged by stealth  
To plead with her for mercy on her life  
And privily persuade her, as we find,  
To cast out Bothwell from her secret thought,  
She would die first ere so divorce her soul  
From faith and hope that hangs on him and feeds  
Her constant spirit with comfort which sustains  
His child alive within her ; for she thinks  
Haply to move men's hearts even by the plea  
That hardens them against her, being believed,  
For the false fruit's sake of her fatal womb,  
The seed of Bothwell, that with her should burn  
Rather than bring forth shame, and in this land  
Become a root of wars unborn and fire  
Kindled among our children.

## MAITLAND

Nay, this plea  
Can be but sometime to defend her life  
And put back judgment ; never could she think,  
Though love made witless whom the world found  
wise,  
His seed might reign in Scotland.

## MORTON

We are not  
So barren of our natural brood of kings  
As to be grafted from so vile a stock  
Though he were now cut off who grows yet green  
Upon the stem so shaken and pierced through  
With cankers now that gnaw the grain away ;  
Nor if the child whom whatsoe'er he be  
We for the kingdom's comfort needs must seem  
To take for true-begotten, and receive  
As issued of her husband's kingly blood,  
Should live not to take up with timely hand  
The inheritance whereto we hold him born,  
Should the crown therefore by his death derive  
To the queen's kin, or hand of Hamilton  
Assume the state and sway that slides from his :  
His father hath a brother left alive,  
The younger son of Lennox, who might put  
More hopefully his nephew's title on  
Than leave it for the spoil of hungry hands  
That would make war upon our present state,  
Unseat the rule of stablished things, unmake  
The counsel and the creed whereby we stand,  
And Scotland with us, firm of foot and free  
Against the whole face of the weaponed world :

But this boy's crown shall be a golden ring  
To hoop and hold our state and strength in one  
And with the seemly name of king make sure  
The rent bulk of our labouring commonwealth  
And solder its flawed sides ; his right of reign  
Is half our gift who reign in him, and half  
His heritage of blood, whose lineal name  
Shall not by note of usurpation strike  
With strangeness or offence the world's wide ear  
That hears a Stuart our prince's uncle crowned  
In the dead child's succession, and this state  
Made safe in him and stable to sustain  
What chance abroad may range or breed at home  
Of force to shake it.

MAITLAND

While the child lives yet,  
A nearer hope than of his father's kin  
Looks fairer on us ; yet in that life's wreck  
This rope might hold at need.

MORTON

Ay, or we fall,  
Who stand against the house of Hamilton  
In this man's name ; his kinsman Ruthven, Mar,  
Myself and Athol, who sustain his cause  
Against their part alone.

•

MAITLAND

So do you well ;  
Yet had I rather on the queen's appeal,  
In her dead father's and her young child's name

Pleading for life, with proffer to resign  
Her kingdom to the council's hands or his  
Whom it may mark for regent, she might live  
Even yet our titular queen, and in her name  
The council govern of our trustiest heads,  
While in safe ward of England or of France  
Far from his kindred might her son grow safe,  
And under strange and kindlier suns his strength  
Wax ripe to bear a kingdom ; to this end  
Save Bothwell's life I see no present let,  
Who lives her shame and danger, but being slain  
Takes off from her the peril of men's tongues  
And her more perilous love that while he lives  
It seems will never slacken till her life  
Be made a prey for his, but in his death  
Dies, or lives stingless after ; wherefore most  
It now imports us to lay hand on him  
And on that capture to proclaim divorce  
Between them ere he die, as presently  
His death should seal it and his blood subscribe.  
So might she live and bring against our cause  
No blame of men or danger.

MORTON

In my mind  
Better it were to crown her son for king  
And send her for safe keeping hence in guard  
To live in England prisoner while we stand  
As safe from her as blameless of her blood  
Who reigning but in name on us should reign  
Indeed on all our enemies' hopes, and turn  
From us the hopeless hearts of half our friends  
For the bare name's sake of her seeming reign  
And mask of false-faced empire.



## MAITLAND

As I think,  
The main mind of the council will not bend  
To any reason on our parts proposed  
For her removal hence or titular reign,  
Nor with the breath of our advice be blown  
Beside their purpose ; if the queen consent  
That her son's head be hallowed with her crown  
And hers be bare before him, she shall live,  
And that close record of her secret hand,  
The proofs and scriptures in her casket locked  
That seal her part in Darnley's bloodshedding,  
Shall yet lie dumb in darkness ; else, I dread,  
She shall be tried by witness in them writ  
And each word there be clamorous on men's tongues  
As the doom uttered of her present death.  
And not more instant should her judgment be  
Than her swift execution ; for they think,  
I know, to find no safety while she lives ;  
So that in no case shall she pass alive  
Out of this realm while power is in their lips  
To speed or stay her.

## MORTON

They shall never think  
To set before all eyes the whole tale forth  
In popular proof and naked evidence  
To plead against her ; Balfour, that betrayed  
Her counsels to us, should then have done more scathe  
Than ever he did service ; they must know  
It were not possible to let this proof  
Stand in the sun's sight, and such names be read

For partners of her deed and not her doom  
As Huntley's and Argyle's. Have they not heard  
What should suffice to show if there be cause  
To seal some part yet of this secret up,  
How dearly Bothwell held those privy scrolls  
Preserved as witness to confound at need  
The main part of his judges, and abash  
Their sentence with their clear complicity  
In the crime sentenced? yea, so dear a price  
He set on these, that flying for life he sends  
Dalgleish his trustiest servant from Dunbar  
To bring again from Balfour's hands to his  
The enamelled casket in whose silver hold  
Lay the queen's letters and the bond subscribed  
Which at Craigmillar writ a live man dead.  
This was a smooth and seasonable hour  
For one of so soft spirit and tender heart  
To send and seek for love of good days gone  
A love-gift that his lady brought from France  
To hold sweet scents or jewels; and the man  
That to his envoy so delivered it  
And sent our council warning to waylay  
And where to intercept it, this was one  
Meet for such trust and amorous offices,  
Balfour, that yielding us the castle up  
Yields likewise for a sword into our hands  
To take by stroke of justice the queen's life  
His witness with what words she tempted him  
From her own lips, how lovingly and long,  
To kill her husband; yet he durst not; then  
How at her bidding he might well take heart,  
She said, to do it; yet he stood fearful off;  
Whereat she brake into a glimmering wrath  
That called him coward and bade him live assured

If his tongue ever let this counsel forth  
By her sure mean and suddenly to die.

## MAITLAND

This were a sword to drink her life indeed  
But that my hope is better of the lords  
Than that their heart is fixed upon her death ;  
And for the commons and their fiery tongue,  
The loud-lipped pilot of their windy will,  
This famine of their anger shall feed full  
And slake its present need but with the spoil  
Made of the piteous remnants of her faith  
By the stout hand here of their friend Glencairn,  
Who from this chapel of her palace rends  
All holy ornament, grinds down with steel  
The images whereon Christ dies in gold,  
Unsanctifies her sovereign sanctuary,  
Unmoulds her God and mints and marks him new,  
And makes his molten chalices run down  
Into strange shape and service ; this should ease,  
Meseems, the hunger of the hate they bear  
That creed for which they held her first in hate ;  
And for the secular justice to be done  
For his death's sake whom all these loathed alive,  
It should content them that the trial has past  
On those we held in hand, and by this test  
The man whose marriage masque on that loud night  
Was pretext for the queen to lie apart  
From the near danger of her husband's bed,  
Sebastian, stands approved as innocent  
And no part of her purpose ; while the twain  
Who bore the charge that was to load with death  
The secret house, and to their master's hands

Consigned the mean of murder, have endured  
The perfect proof of torture, and confessed  
In the extreme pang of evidence enforced  
The utmost of their knowledge.

MORTON

These may serve  
To allay men's instant angers ; but much more  
His face should profit us whom France detains  
With suit and proffer from the queen-mother  
With all their force and flower of war or craft  
To help him to the crown of his own land  
Or throne at least of regency therein,  
If he will take but France for constant friend  
And turn our hearts with his from England : this  
Would Catherine give him for his friendship's sake  
Who gives her none for all this, but his hope  
Cleaves yet to England, though for fraud or fear  
Again it fail him ; so being foiled and wroth,  
He hath, she tells him, a right English heart,  
And in that faith withholds him craftily  
From his desired departure and return,  
Which should be more of all this land desired  
Than of himself ; this Elphinstone that comes  
For him from Paris, in his master's name  
To plead as in her brother's for the queen,  
Bears but the name of Murray in his mouth,  
Whose present eye and tongue, whose spirit and  
mind, <sup>a</sup>  
Our need of him requires. When their intent  
Shall by the lords in council be made known  
To him that stands here for Elizabeth,  
How in her name will he receive the word  
That but from Murray's lip she thinks to hear,

And then determine with what large response  
For peace or war she may resolve herself?

## MAITLAND

If she shall find our council one in will  
To shed by doom of judgment the queen's blood,  
Even by Throgmorton's mouth I am certified  
That she will call on France to strike with her  
For this their sister's sake, and join in one  
Their common war to tread our treason down ;  
Or if she find not aid of France, from Spain  
Will she seek help to hold our French allies  
With curb and snaffle fast of Spanish steel,  
For fear their powers against her lend us might  
That would not lend against us ; she meantime,  
While Philip's hand hath France as by the hair,  
Shall loosen on us England, to redeem  
That forfeit life which till the day of fight  
Her trust is but in Murray to preserve,  
Seeing he spake never word in English ear  
Against this queen his sister.

## MORTON

Being returned,  
He shall bear witness if his heart be bent  
Rather to this queen's love or that queen's fear  
Than to the sole weal of his natural land  
That hath more need he should take thought for her  
Than one of these or the other. If the lords  
Be purposed, as I guess, to bid the queen  
Ere this month end make choice of death or life,  
To live uncrowned and call her young son king  
Or die by doom attainted, none but he

By her submission or her death must rise  
Regent of Scotland ; and each hour that flits  
With louder tongue requires him, and rebukes  
His tardiness of spirit or foot to flee  
By swift and private passage forth of France  
To where our hearts wait that have need of him.

SCENE II. *Lochleven Castle*

*The QUEEN and MARY BEATON*

QUEEN

I would I knew before this day be dead  
If I must live or die. Why art thou pale ?  
It seems thou art not sad though I sit here  
And thou divide my prison ; for I see  
Thine eye more kindled and thy lip more calm  
And hear thy voice more steadfast than it was  
When we were free of body ; then the soul  
Seemed to sit heavy in thee, and thy face  
Was as a water's wearied with the wind,  
Dim eye and fitful lip, whereon thy speech  
Would break and die untimely. Do these walls  
And that wan wrinkling water at their foot  
For my sake please thee ? Thou shouldst love me well,  
Or hate, I know not whether, if to share  
The cup wherein I drink delight the lip  
That pledges in it mine.

MARY BEATON

If I be pale,  
For fear it is not nor for discontent

Here to sit bounded ; I could well be pleased  
To shoot my thoughts no further than this wall  
That is my body's limit, and to lead  
My whole life's length as quiet as we sit  
Till death fulfilled all quiet, did I know  
There were no wars without nor days for you  
Of change and many a turbulent chance to be  
Whence I must not live absent.

QUEEN

Hast thou part,  
Think'st thou, as in time past, predestinate  
In all my days and chances ?

MARY BEATON

Yea, I know it.

QUEEN

If thou have grace to prophesy, perchance  
Canst thou tell too how I shall fare forth hence,  
If quick or dead ? I had rather so much know  
Than if thou love or hate me.

MARY BEATON

Truly then  
My mind forecasts with no great questioning  
You shall pass forth alive.

QUEEN

What, to my death ?

MARY BEATON

To life and death that comes of life at last ;  
I know not when it shall.

QUEEN

I would be sure  
If our good guardian know no more than thou ;  
I think she should ; yet if she knew I think  
I should not long desire to know as much,  
But the utmost thing that were of her foreknown  
Should in mine eye stand open.

MARY BEATON

She is kind.

QUEEN

I would she were a man that had such heart ;  
So might it do me service.

MARY BEATON

So it may.

QUEEN

How ? in her son ? Ay, haply, could I bring  
Mine own heart, down to feed their hearts with hope,  
They might grow great enough to do me good.  
I tell thee yet, I thought indeed to die  
When I came hither. 'Tis but five weeks gone—  
Five, and two days ; I keep the count of days  
Here ; I can mind the smell of the moist air



As we took land, and when we got to horse  
I thought I never haply might ride more,  
Nor hear a hoof's beat on the glad green ground,  
Nor feel the free steed stretch him to the way  
Nor his flank bound to bear me : then meseemed  
Men could not make me live in prison long ;  
It were unlike my being, out of my doom ;  
Free should I live, or die. Then came these walls  
And this blind water shuddering at the sun  
That rose ere we had ten miles ridden ; and here  
The black boat rocked that took my feet off shore,  
And set them in this prison ; and as I came  
The honey-heavy heather touched my sense  
Wellnigh to weeping ; I did think to die  
And smell nought sweeter than the naked grave.  
Yet sit we not among the worms and roots,  
But can see this much—from the round tower here  
The square walls of the main tower opposite  
And the bare court between ; a gracious sight.  
Yet did they not so well to let me live,  
If they love life too ; I will find those friends  
That found these walls and fears to fence me with  
A narrower lodging than this seven feet's space  
That yet I move in, where nor lip nor limb  
Shall breathe or move for ever.

MARY BEATON

Do you think  
You shall not long live bound ?

QUEEN

Impossible.  
I would have violent death, or life at large ;

And either speedy. Were it in their mind  
To slay me here and swiftly, as I thought,  
Thou wouldst not here sit by their leave with me ;  
They get not so much grace who are now to die  
And could not need it ; yet I have heard it said  
The headsman grants what sort of grace he may—  
A grievous grace—to one about to bleed  
That asks some boon before his neck lie down ;  
Thy face was haply such a boon to me,  
Being cradle-fellows and fast-hearted friends,  
To see before I died, and this the gift  
Given of my headsmen's grace ; what think'st thou ?

MARY BEATON

Nay,

That I know nought of headsmen.

QUEEN

Thou hast seen—

It is a sharp strange thing to see men die.  
I have prayed these men for life, thou knowest, have  
sent

Prayers in my son's and my dead father's name,  
Their kings that were and shall be, and men say  
One was well loved of the people, and their love  
Is good to have, a goodly stay—and yet  
I do not greatly think I fear to die.  
I would not put off life yet ; if I live,  
For one thing most shall these men pay me dear,  
That I was ever touched with fear of death.  
Thou hast heard how seeing a child on the island once  
Strayed over from the shore, I cried to him  
Through the pierced wall between five feet of stone  
To bid my friends pray God but for my soul,

My body was worth little ; and they thought  
I was cast down with bitter dread of heart ;  
Please God, for that will I get good revenge.  
I dream no more each night now on my lord,  
And yet God knows how utterly I know  
I would be hewn in pieces—yea, I think—  
Or turned with fire to ashes for his sake :  
Surely I would.

*Enter* LADY LOCHLEVEN

LADY LOCHLEVEN

Good morrow to your grace.

QUEEN

Good madam, if the day be good or no  
Our grace can tell not ; while our grace had yet  
The grace to walk an hour in the sun's eye  
With your fair daughters and our bedfellows  
About your battlements that hold us fast,  
Or breathe outside the gateway where our foot  
Might feel the terrace under, we might say  
The morn was good or ill ; being here shut up,  
We make no guesses of the sun, but think  
To find no more good morrows.

LADY LOCHLEVEN

Let your grace  
Chide not in thought with me ; for this restraint,  
That since your late scarce intercepted flight  
Has been imposed upon me, from my heart  
I think you think that I desired it not.

## QUEEN

Ay, we were fools, we Maries twain, and thought  
To be into the summer back again  
And see the broom blow in the golden world,  
The gentle broom on hill. For all men's talk  
And all things come and gone yet, yet I find  
I am not tired of that I see not here,  
The sun, and the large air, and the sweet earth,  
And the hours that hum like fire-flies on the hills  
As they burn out and die, and the bowed heaven,  
And the small clouds that swim and swoon i' the sun,  
And the small flowers. Now should I keep these  
things

But as sweet matter for my thoughts in French,  
To set them in a sonnet ; here at home  
I read too plain in our own tongue my doom,  
To see them not, and love them. Pardon me ;  
I would have none weep for me but my foes,  
And then not tears. Be not more discontent  
Than I to think that you could deem of me  
As of one thankless ; who were thankless found,  
Not knowing that by no will or work of yours  
I sit suppressed thus from the sun ; 'tis mine,  
My fault that smites me ; and my masters' will,  
Not mine or yours it is, that for my fault  
Devised this penance ; which on me wrought out  
May fall again on them.

,

## LADY LOCHLEVEN

Madam, alas,  
I came on no such errand to your grace  
As lacked more words to make it sad than those

It was to speak ; and these have I put back  
Too long and idly. Here are now at gate  
Three messengers sent from the parliament  
To speak with you.

## QUEEN

With us to speak ? you know,  
Nor chamberlain nor herald have we here  
To marshal men before us. Let them come,  
Whom all our kingdom left could keep not out  
From this high presence-chamber. Stay ; I would  
not  
Be stricken unaware, nor find in you  
That which I thought not ; it were out of kind,  
Unwomanlike, to give me to their hands  
Who came to slay me, knowing not why they came ;  
Is it for that ?

## LADY LOCHLEVEN

God's grace forbid it ! nay——

## QUEEN

I ask if they bring warrant for my death ?  
I have seen such things and heard, since leaves  
bloomed last,  
That this were no such marvellous thing to hear  
But if this be, before I speak with them,  
I will know first.

## LADY LOCHLEVEN

Let not your highness dread——

## QUEEN

I do not bid you put me out of dread.  
Have you not heard, and hear? The queen desires  
To know of her born subject till she die  
And keeper of her prison, if these men  
Be come to slay her.

## LADY LOCHLEVEN

They come to bid your grace——

## QUEEN

Bid my grace do their bidding? that is like :  
That I should do it were unlike. I must live,  
I see, this some while yet. What men are these?

## LADY LOCHLEVEN

The first, Sir Robert Melville ; then the lords  
Ruthven and Lindsay.

## QUEEN

Bid my first friend in,  
While one friend may be bidden ; he, I think,  
Can come but friendlike. [*Exit* LADY LOCHLEVEN.

What should these desire?

One head of theirs I swore last month to have,  
That then beheld me, some day, if that hand  
Whereon I swore should take not first my life.  
And one the son of him that being nigh dead  
Rose from his grave's edge to pluck down alive  
A murdered man before him—what should he

Bring less than murder, being his father's son,  
In such a hand as his that stabbed my friend ?

MARY BEATON

Perchance they come to take your crown, not life.

QUEEN

What, my name too ? but till I yield it them,  
They have but half the royal thing they hold,  
The state they ravish ; and they shall not have  
My name but with my life ; while that sits fast,  
As in my will it sits, I am queen, and they  
My servants yet that fear to take my life ;  
For so thou seest they fear ; and I did ill,  
That in first sight of present-seeming death  
Made offer to resign into their hands  
What here is mine of empire : I shall live,  
And being no queen I live not.

*Enter* SIR ROBERT MELVILLE

Welcome, sir ;  
I have found since ever times grew strange with me  
Good friends of your good brother and yourself,  
And think to find. What errand have you here ?

SIR R. MELVILLE

Let not your majesty cast off the thought  
Which calls me friend, though I be first to bear  
An evil errand. 'Tis the council's mind  
That you shall live, and in their hand the proofs  
Shall die that plead against you——

QUEEN

Is this ill ?

I know not well what proof that man could show  
Would prove men honest that make war on faith,  
Show treason trusty, bleach rebellion white,  
Bid liars look loyal ; and much less I know  
What proof might speak against me from their lips  
Whose breath may kill and quicken evidence,  
Or what good change of mind rebuke the lie  
That lived upon them ; but that I must live,  
And of their proofs unspotted, sounds not worse  
Than if a friend had come to bear me word  
That I must die belied.

SIR R. MELVILLE

Upon these terms

Are they content for you to live in ward ;  
That you yield up as with free hand the crown  
And right of kingdom to your son, who straight  
At Stirling shall receive it from their hands ;  
Else shall your grace be put to trial, and bear  
The doom ensuing, with what of mortal weight  
May hang upon that sentence.

QUEEN

Sir, methought

This word of doom for shame's sake now was dead  
Even in their mouths that first it soiled, and made  
Even shamelessness astonished ; not again  
We thought to hear of judgment, we that are,  
While yet we are anything, and yet must be,  
The voice which deals, and not the ear which takes,



Judgment. God gave man might to murder me,  
Who made me woman, weaker than a man,  
But God gave no man right, I think, to judge,  
Who made me royal. Come then, I will die ;  
I did not think to live. Must I die here ?

SIR R. MELVILLE

Madam, my errand——

QUEEN

Ay, sir, is received  
Here in my heart ; I thank you ; but you know  
I had no hope before ; yet sounds it strange  
That should not sound, to die at such men's hands,  
A queen, and at my years. Forgive me, sir ;  
Me it not comforts to discomfort you,  
Who are yet my friend—as much as man on earth—  
If any, you—that come to bid me die.

SIR R. MELVILLE

Be not cast down so deep : I have an errand  
From the English queen, your friend, and here en-  
sheathed  
By my sword's secret side, for your fair hand  
A letter writ from her ambassador  
Praying you subscribe what thing my comrades will,  
Since nought whereto your writing was compelled  
Can hang hereafter on you as a chain  
When but for this bond written you stand free.

QUEEN

Ay, I know that : how speaks Elizabeth ?



Since last we looked on you ; for you, fair sir,  
[To RUTHVEN.

A year I think and four good months are sped  
Since at that father's back whose name you bear  
I saw your face dashed red with blood. My lords,  
Ye come to treat with us ambassadors  
Sent from our subjects ; and we cannot choose,  
Being held of them in bonds from whom ye come,  
But give you leave to speak.

LINDSAY

Thus, briefly, madam.  
If you will live to die no death by doom,  
This threefold bond of contract that we bring  
Requires your hand ; wherein of your free will  
First must you yield the crown of Scotland up  
To your child's hand ; then by this second deed  
The place and name of regent through this realm  
To the earl of Murray shall you here assign,  
Or, if he list not take this coil in hand,  
Then to the council ; last, this deed empowers  
The lords of Mar and Morton with myself  
To set the crown upon the young king's head.  
These shall you sign.

QUEEN

These I shall sign, or die.  
But hear you, sirs ; when hither you brought these,  
Burned not your hearts within you by the way  
Thinking how she that should subscribe was born  
King James's daughter ? that this shameful hand,  
Fit to sustain nor sword nor staff o' the realm,

Hath the blood in it of those years of kings  
That tamed the neck and drove with spurs the sides  
Of this beast people that now casts off me ?  
Ay, this that is to sign, no hand but this  
Throbs with their sole inheritance of life  
Who held with bit and bridle this bound land  
And made it pace beneath them. What are ye  
That I should tell you so, whose fathers fought  
Beneath my fathers ? Where my grandsire fell  
And all this land about him, were there none  
That bore on Flodden, sirs, such names as yours,  
And shamed them not ? Heard no men past of lords  
That for the king's crown gave their crown of life  
For death to harry ? Did these grieve or grudge  
To be built up into that bloody wall  
That could not fence the king ? Were no dead found  
Of that huge cirque wherein my grandsire lay  
But of poor men and commons ? Yea, my lords,  
I think the sires that bred you had not heart  
As men have writ of them, but sent to fight  
For them their vassals visored with their crests,  
And these did well, and died, and left your sires  
That hid their heads for ever and lived long  
The name and false name of their deeds and death.  
How should their sons else, how should ye, being born,  
If born ye be, not bastards, of those lords  
Who gat this lying glory to be called  
Loyal, and in the reek of a false field  
To fall so for my fathers—how, I say,  
Dare sons of such come hither, how stand here,  
From off the daughter's head of all those kings  
To pluck the crown that on my fathers' heads  
Ye say they died to save ? I will not sign ;  
No, let some Flodden sword dip in my blood ;

Here I sit fast, and die. Good friend that was,  
[To SIR R. MELVILLE.  
Tell my great sister that you saw my hand  
Strive and leave off to sign ; I had no skill  
To shape false letters.

## RUTHVEN

Madam, no man here  
But knows by heart the height of your stout words  
And strength of speech or sweetness ; all this breath  
Can blow not back the storm yourself raised up  
Whose tempest shakes the kingdom from your hand,  
And not men's hate. You have been loved of men ;  
All faith of heart, all honour possible,  
While man might give, men gave you. Now, those  
deeds  
Which none against your will enforced you do  
Have set that spirit against you in men's minds  
That till you die (as then your memory may)  
Nor your fair beauty nor your fiery heart  
Can lay with spells asleep.

SIR R. MELVILLE (*aside*)

I pray you, madam,  
Think on mine errand.

## QUEEN

Wherefore should I sign ?  
If I be queen that so unqueen myself,  
What shall it profit me to give my foes  
This one thing mine that hallows me, this name,  
This royal shadow ? If I be no queen,

Let me bleed here ; as being uncrowned I know  
That I shall die of all your promises.

**LINDSAY**

We came not, madam, to put force on you,  
And save your life by violence ; but take note,  
*[Laying his hand on her arm.]*  
As in this hand your own is fast, and hath  
No power till mine give back its power again  
To strive or sign, so fast are you in ward  
For life or death of them that bid you live  
And be no queen, or die.

QUEEN

I thank you, sir,  
That of your love and courtesy have set  
This knightly sign upon my woman's flesh  
For proof if I be queen or no, that bear  
Such writing on my body of men's hands  
To seal mine abdication.   Sirs, read here ;  
What need I sign again? here may men see  
If she be queen of Scotland on whose arm  
Are writ such scriptures as I wist not yet  
Men's eyes might read on any woman born.  
Yet will I write, being free, to assure myself  
This is my hand indeed that wears the sign  
Which proves it vassal to the stronger.   Sirs,  
Take back your papers ; and albeit, my lord,  
The conquest you have made of me henceforth  
Lift up your heart with pride, I pray you yet  
Boast not yourself on women overmuch,  
Lest being their conqueror called and praised for that  
Men call you too their tyrant.   Once and twice

Have we grasped hands ; the third time they shall  
cross

Must leave one cold for ever. Nay, I pray,  
Who may command not surely, yet I pray,  
Speak not, but go ; ye have that ye came for ; go,  
And make your vaunt to have found so meek a thing  
As would yield all, and thank you.

[*Exeunt* LINDSAY, RUTHVEN, and SIR R. MELVILLE.

Hast thou read  
Of sick men healed with baths of children's blood ?  
I must be healed of this my plague of shame,  
This sickness of disgrace they leave with me,  
Bathing in theirs my body.

MARY BEATON

In such streams  
You have washed your hands already.

QUEEN

What, in war ?

Ay, there I have seen blood shed for me, and yet  
Wept not nor trembled ; if my heart shrink now,  
It is for angry pity of myself  
That I should look on shame.

MARY BEATON

What shame, my queen ?

QUEEN

Thy queen ? why, this, that I, queen once of Scots,  
Am no more now than thine. Call back the lords ;  
I will unsign their writing, and here die ;  
It were the easier end.

MARY BEATON

It is your will—  
Forgive me, madam—on this cause again  
To grapple with Lord Lindsay?

QUEEN

True, not yet ;  
Thou thought'st to make me mad, remembering that ;  
But it hath made me whole. My wits are sound,  
Remembering I must live. When I have slept,  
Say I would gladly see the kindlier face  
Again of our dear hostess with her son  
To put those angry eyes out of my sight  
That lightened late upon me ; say, being sad,  
And (if thou wilt) being frightened, I must find  
The comfortable charities of friends  
More precious to me. 'Tis but truth, I am fain,  
Being tired, to sleep an hour : mine eyes are hot ;  
Where tears will come not, fire there breeds instead,  
Thou knowest, to burn them through. Let me lie  
down ;  
I will expect their comforts in an hour. [Exeunt.

SCENE III. *Holyrood*MAITLAND *and* SIR NICHOLAS THROGMORTON

THROGMORTON

Why would your council give no ear to me  
Ere they rode hence so hot to crown their prince ?  
Why hear not first one word ?



MAITLAND

One threat the more  
From your queen's lips bequeathed by rote to yours,  
Or one more promise? If we run her course,  
This queen will leave us in the briars, we know,  
There to lie fast or labour till the thorns  
Have rent our flesh and raiment.

THROGMORTON

Sir, take thought  
If help were sent not at the siege of Leith,  
When France had grasped you by the throat, and sea  
To land gave battle, from that sovereign's hand  
Whom now ye trust not.

MAITLAND

Ay, for her own ends  
She cast the French out and flung back their power  
Which here was deadly to her, and of that deed  
Had recompense with surety : but what aid  
Must we now look for of her, on whose will  
Hang all our enemies' hopes? I would I had been  
Banished seven years my country, and your queen  
On that condition had but as a friend  
Dealt freely with us. Let her now proclaim,  
Her own seed failing, this our prince her heir,  
And England shall no less have care of him  
Than we his lineal servants ; else, if hence  
We yield him to your keeping, men will say  
We have given our natural master to be kept  
As among wolves a sheep, and made our hope  
The fosterling of danger : and small trust

Should we put in her that has newly dealt  
By secret message to subvert our state,  
We know, with those indeed of our queen's kin  
From whose report we know it.

THROGMORTON

What have they said ?

MAITLAND

That you brought proffers of her aid and love  
To incite their arms, to quicken the slow snake  
Whose sting lies cold yet in their policy,  
But watched and warmed of her with hand and eye  
The perfect poison should put forth, and thrust  
At once the hot and cloven tongue of war  
Even in our face and bosom ; but for fear,  
It may be, or being yet at heart's root Scots,—  
For this or that cause, through false heart or true,  
So is it, that in doubt of your good mind  
Toward them or Scotland, in whose breast you sought  
To make the mutual swords of her own sons  
Clash as they crossed once more, drinking her blood,  
They sent us word of all your embassy.

THROGMORTON

But you, whate'er these thought or feigned to think,  
Think no such foolish evil as fools may,  
Deem not of England as the Scot who deems  
She hath no will, no line of life, no hope,  
No thought but Scotland's ruin, and our queen  
No sense of aught here done—her sister's doom,  
The people's rage, the council's purpose—nought

But where to find in these a guileful mean  
To strike at Scotland? why, these fears are old,  
White-bearded dreams, suspicions long grown grey,  
Dangers and doubts toothless and eyeless now  
That fright nor babe nor dotard ; and your thought  
Finds room for such ? What profit should she have  
To turn your swords against each other's throats  
And pick some privy chance of vantage up  
That fell between your factions at her feet ?  
Such chance indeed of vantage might there fall  
For your own queen, who nowise has been slow  
To nurse the chance and wait on it and serve,  
From strifes rekindled and requickening claims  
Set each at each in England, whence or craft  
Or force might filch or seize for Scotland's sake  
Some no less jewel than her eye ere now  
Was fixed so fast on, even the crown that hangs  
In doubt yet of unsure inheritance,  
As hangs not yours for us to pluck at, who,  
Reign whoso may when this queen's life is quenched,  
In Scotland shall reign never.

## MAITLAND

That I know,  
And this no less ; that he who reigns shall reign  
Never by right of England's leave or love,  
Her ward or servant ; as, this queen removed,  
Haply ye hope her lineal heir might be,  
And in that hope work with these Hamiltons  
To strike at us in Mary's name, and pluck  
Death from our hands upon her ; you, your queen,  
And they her kinsfolk, all ye seek her death ;  
No word but of her freedom in your mouths,

No end than this less looked for in your hearts.  
Speak to the council as but now to me,  
Defy them in her cause, not all the world  
For three days' space shall save her.

## THROGMORTON

Nay, not we

Desire the queen's death at your hand provoked,  
But here from Tullibardine's mouth I know  
Her kin at secret heart desire no less,  
And will ye but allow their house its right  
By heritage to reign, no need, they say,  
To take more care for her, who privily  
May be put out of life, and no man more  
In that dead name be troubled ; and again,  
If they with no such promise being assured  
Shall not join hands with you, and England then  
Shall bring the queen back whom ye spared to slay,  
Ye are lost and they not winners. Therefore is it  
That of Lord Mar and of yourself I seek  
Help for the queen's deliverance, who being dead  
Can profit no man but your foes and ours  
That love not England more than they love you  
Nor you than they love England : shall not both  
With their own cause take part ?

## MAITLAND

It is too late ;

What part should we take with you, to what end,  
Since all the council knows your traffic now  
With their chief foes, and how being there betrayed  
You can but bring us such a friendship back  
As they would none of ?

## THROGMORTON

Sir, if yet you fear,  
If you suspect yet that our queen desires  
To speed the death of yours or make it sure  
By pleading for her, or by threat of war  
Denounced for her sake, let this letter be  
The seal and warrant of our single heart,  
Wherein she threatens war—but smile not yet—  
If in his mother's name for him discrowned  
Ye crown the child that has but wailed one year.  
This should the lords have seen ; but even for doubt  
Lest it should set their spirits on such fire  
As but her blood shed presently could slake,  
And this be deemed its aim indeed at heart  
And privy purpose of her hand who writ,  
Your eye alone must read that reads it now  
And the lord Murray's ; for they know that send  
And with it send me this for secret charge,  
They know the truth and heat of fiery will  
That urges our queen's heart upon this war,  
And for no end but for her sake who sits  
Held fast in bonds of her own subjects born,  
And with her all the majesty on earth  
That walks with monarchs, and no king alive  
But wears some shameful parcel of her chain.

## MAITLAND

Though this be truth, yet they that hold it false  
Will join in wrath with them that hold it true,  
Even for the threat's sake and for shame, will join  
To write red answer in the slain queen's blood  
Back to the queen that threatens. Nay, herself

Who sits in bonds yet of us will not yield  
To come forth singly safe, nor give consent  
That Bothwell should fare worse than she, or have  
More harm or danger ; and being thus incensed,  
A three-edged weapon in the council's hand  
Is drawn to smite at need, a treble charge  
Whereon to impeach her ; on that statute first  
Made of this land's religion seven years since,  
Which though she signed not, yet its breach in her  
Shall stand for guilt before them ; and thereto  
Shall she be challenged of incontinence  
With more than Bothwell, who by noteless nights  
Have made her bed adulterous ; and of each  
The proof that seals her shame in him, they say,  
Lies in their hand ; last, of her murdered lord  
Their warrant cries against her ; and from these  
No man may think to quit her nor secure,  
Save he that here comes timeliest for such toil  
As none beside may take upon his hand.

*Enter* MURRAY

Welcome, my lord, and to a land that lacks  
 As never yet it lacked or looked for you.  
 What comfort bring you for her wounds from France  
 Besides that present help of hand and head  
 We heard returned an hour since?

MURRAY

Sir, thus much ;

All of our faith in France will in our cause  
Live or die fighting ; gold and men in arms  
Will flow thence on us in full stream and free  
If Scotland set but open hand or breast

To greet them coming ; they will buy our love  
At what best price they may.

## THROGMORTON

But you, my lord,  
That have loved England ever, and that know  
The worth and unworth weighed of either friend,  
French faith or English, will not surely buy  
With heavy hate of England the light love  
That France and fraud would sell you, nor for this  
Cast off the fortune and the peace unborn  
That may bind fast in one strong ring of sea  
Two jewels become one jewel, one such land  
As from the stout fort of a single heart  
Fixed like a sea-rock might look forth and laugh  
Upon the under wars of all the world,  
And see not higher the heads of kingdoms risen  
Than of small waves in summer ? will you pluck  
This hope out of the hopeful hand of time  
Ere he can gather, this good fruit that grows  
On the green present branch of time's grey tree  
To feed the future where the hungry past  
Could get but blood for bread, and with bare steel  
Died starved and smitten ?

## MURRAY

Sir, when I came in  
By secret flight from France, out of the guard  
Wherein I lived inwalled with watch of men  
That the court set about me to withhold  
My foot from England—when an English boat  
Had borne me oversea by secret night

From privy port to port, at the long last  
I saw your queen's face darken on mine own  
As on a servant favour-fallen, that came  
To take rebuke and speak not ; in her speech  
I found no note of favour, no good word,  
Nor honour such as late in France I found  
And finding fled from : sharply with strange eyes  
She glanced against me ; taxed me with the bonds  
Wherein men held my sister ; half a threat  
Was all her promise : I returned but this,  
I would be still a Scotsman, and this land  
I had more mind to serve and do her good  
Than either of these queens ; so parted thence  
Unfriendlike, yet with no breach openly  
Proclaimed of friendship ; and being here, my mind  
Is yet to serve no mistress but alone  
This earth my bones were bred of, this kind land  
Which moulded me and fostered ; her strong milk  
Put manhood in my blood, and from my heart  
If she that nurtured need it now to drink  
I think not much to shed it. If those lords  
In whom her power now stands shall with one mouth  
Bid me put on this weight of regency,  
For no man's fear shall I deny them ; she,  
Your queen that threatens me with ignominy  
If I obey their choice and call, must know  
That to God only and my heart, those twain  
That are one eye to know me and to judge,  
Will I refer it ; and of them being known  
That with pure purpose and no soiled intent  
I take this charge up, I will bear it through  
To the right end. Yet ere my mind be fixed,  
I will behold her that was queen, and see  
How sits the spirit within her ; but howe'er,



Till Bothwell in our hands lie trapped and dead  
She must not pass forth free ; and we will hold  
No traffic for the bear's skin merchant-like  
Before the bear be caught ; but if your queen  
Proclaim against us therefore war, be sure  
We will not lose our lives, yield up our lands,  
And bear repute of rebels through the world,  
Who might, how loth soe'er, in all men's eyes  
Make our cause clear as righteousness ; the proofs  
Which in our hands lie darkling yet, but bear  
The perfect witness of those ill deeds past  
That bring her thus in danger of our doom  
And righteous peril of all-judging law,  
Must to the world's eye nakedly set forth  
What cause is hers, and ours ; when if I stand  
In the king's likeness of the state elect,  
To him in me shall all knees bend and hearts  
Kneel subjected ; for them that hold apart,  
No head shall stand of any Hamilton  
That shall not bow before my sword or me.

SCENE IV. *Lochleven Castle*

*The QUEEN and GEORGE DOUGLAS*

QUEEN

Will he be here to-day ? Alas, my friend,  
I made my hope of this till he should come,  
And now he comes I would not look on him.  
I know not what put hope into my fear  
That this your mother's and my father's son  
Should do me good for evil.

GEORGE DOUGLAS

Madam, I think  
The mind can be but good that marshals him  
To your fair presence ; nay, though even his soul  
Were damned so deep as to desire your death,  
He durst not come to show us his purpose here  
Who were not chosen for murderers at his hire  
But guards and servants that would shed their lives  
Ere yours should look on danger.

QUEEN

That we know,  
And have no better wage than love to give,  
Which more to give we grudge not, being so poor,  
Than from your queen's hands you disdain to take :  
But what knows he ? for aught our brother knows,  
Your mother and yourself are envious guards  
That hate me for my faith as for my fault  
And hold your hands but till he bids you slay  
Or yield me to my slayers. Ah my last knight,  
You shall do well to leave me at my need ;  
He will command you ; when this brother knows  
I am not hated, think you then my friend  
Shall not be chidden from me ?

GEORGE DOUGLAS

When my life  
Is bidden from my body ; not till then  
Shall I be found obedient.

*Enter* LADY LOCHLEVEN

QUEEN

Be but wise,  
And wisdom shall not let you disobey.  
Our noble hostess, you have borne a son,  
I dare not say more noble, but I dare  
More simple than his elders ; one whose heart  
Stands fast when fortune stands not, and requires,  
As other men do power and glory and gold,  
No guerdon but the memory writ of him  
To have been most true when fortune was most false,  
And most to have loved whom she most hated : this  
Shall not of them be written. Come you not  
To bring one to me that shall never sin  
As he by faith and folly ? I would say  
Of my great brother and your kingly son  
Nothing but good ; yet can nor you nor I  
Say that he loves me and my fallen estate  
More than the power he comes to take from me,  
Or rather from their hands that ere he came  
Had rent it out of mine. Nay, look not sad ;  
You should be merrier than my mother might,  
Were she now living.

LADY LOCHLEVEN

God shall witness me  
What joy I have of such a guest, or pride  
To be so stricken, madam, of your tongue  
Chastising me for triumph ; if my heart  
Exalt itself for this day's sake, God knows,  
Who hears you mock me.

## QUEEN

Nay, I said no scorn ;  
I had rather need to pray you in his name  
Scorn not at me. Let him come in ; I know  
What ceremony my masters should put on  
Were but to mock their servant.

*Enter* MURRAY, ATHOL, *and* MORTON

Sirs, you twain  
That brought me two months since between you safe  
Out of the town by night that sought my blood  
Myself bid welcome ; but she is not I  
That in this presence should make welcome here  
My father's son ; nor shall my speech usurp  
For modesty that office : yet indeed  
I am glad, my lord, to see your face, that must  
Bring comfort, or an end of all this life  
That yet needs comfort.

## MURRAY

What I may, I will ;  
Yet haply shall you find not in my words  
Or death or comfort ; as you give them heed,  
Shall they prove comfortable or deadly. Sirs,  
I have that to speak and hear that but requires  
The Lady Mary's ear and mine ; I pray you,  
Take not offence that I crave leave to say  
We must for some space lack your company.

MORTON

My lord, the land that puts her trust in you  
Bids us obey, well knowing that love nor fear  
Shall bend you from her service.

LADY LOCHLEVEN

Sir—

MURRAY

Your will ?

LADY LOCHLEVEN

I am no parcel of the sovereign state  
That gives you of its greatness, nor have right  
To speak commandingly ; yet ere I go  
I would desire you by what name I may,  
Look on this lady with such equal eyes  
As nor the wrath and hate of violent men,  
Nor sense of evil done to this land's peace  
By her mischance and evil counsellors,  
Nor (what I would not fear to find in you)  
Desire of rule with pride of station, may  
Divert to do her wrong or glance aside  
From the plain roadway of that righteousness  
Whose name is also mercy. This at least  
Surely by me may be of you required,  
That in this house no wrong by word or act,  
By deed or threat, may touch her.

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MURRAY

Be assured

No wrong shall ever touch her by my hand ;  
And be content to know it.

QUEEN

Madam, these lords  
Know that I thought ere this to find of you  
A mediatress between me and your son ;  
I have my hope, and with a humble heart  
I take your intercession thankfully.

*[Exeunt all but the QUEEN and MURRAY.]*

MURRAY

I would I had another cause to speak  
Or you to listen, than this bitter theme  
That brings us back together, though for that  
I had died a foreign man.

QUEEN

I thought not, sir,  
When we last parted ere the break of spring,  
To meet you thus in summer ; but these months  
Have wrought things stranger on me.

MURRAY

Say, yourself  
Have made of them more strange and perilous use  
Than is the fruit they bear. I am not come  
To flatter with you ; that I seek your death  
I think you fear not, yet should surely know  
The man that seeks were now more like to speed  
Than he that would preserve it. Heaven and earth  
As with the tongue of one same law demand  
Justice against you ; nor can pity breathe  
But low and fearful, till the right be weighed

That must in pity's spite and fear's be done,  
Or this land never thrive. For that right's sake  
And not for hatred or rebellious heart  
Do men require that judgment pass on you  
And bring forth execution ; the broad world  
Expects amazedly when we that rule  
Shall purge this land of blood, which now looks red  
In the world's eye, and blushing not for shame  
Blushes with bloodshed ; in men's general mouths  
The name of Scot is as a man's attain  
Of murderous treason, or as his more vile  
That for base heart and fear or hire of gold  
With folded hands watches the hands that slay  
Grow great in murder ; and God's heavy doom  
Shall be removed not from us, nor his wrath,  
Well may we fear, shall lighten, till the deed  
That reeks as recent yet toward the fair heavens  
Be thoroughly cleansed with judgment.

QUEEN

Must I too  
Bleed to make Scotland clean of baser blood  
Than this she seeks of mine ?

MURRAY

If you shall die,  
Bethink you for what cause, and that sole thought  
Shall seal your lips up from all pride of plea  
That would put in between your deed and doom  
The name of queen to cover you. No age  
That lived on earth red-handed without law  
Ever let pass in peace and unchastised

Such acts as this that yet in all men's ears  
Rings as a cry unanswered. When your lord  
Lay newly murdered, and all tongues of friends  
Were loud in prayer to you to save your name  
From stain of accusation, and yield up  
That head to judgment which the whole world held  
Blood-guilty, first with subtle stretch of time  
Did you put back the trial, then devise  
To make it fruitless save of mockery ; next,  
I cannot say for shame what shame foregone  
Moved you to put upon this loathing land  
That great dishonour to behold and bear  
The man your lover for its lord, and you,  
Queen of all Scots and thrall of one most base,  
While yet the ring was from his finger warm  
That sealed it first, and on his wedded hand  
The young blood of your husband, ere the print  
Had cooled of marriage or of murder, you  
In the hot circle of his amorous arms  
A new-espoused adulteress. Will you say  
You were enforced or by false counsels bent  
To take him to your bosom ? In what eye  
Was not the foregone commerce of your loves  
As bare as shame ? what ear had heard not blown  
His name that was your sword and paramour,  
Whose hand in yours was now as steel to slay,  
Now as a jewel for love to wear, a pledge  
Hot from your lips and from your husband's heart ?  
Who knew not what should make this man so proud  
That none durst speak against him of your friends  
But must abide for answer unaware  
The peril of the swords that followed him ?  
Went he not with you where you went, and bade  
Men come and go, do this or do not, stand



Or pass as pleased him, ere that day had risen  
Which gave the mockery of a ravished bride  
To the false violence of his fraudulent rape  
That hardly she could feign to fear, or hide  
The sweetness of the hour when she might yield  
That which was his before, and in men's eyes  
Make proof of her subjection? Nay, forbear;  
Plead not for shame that force was put on you  
To bear that burden and embrace that shame  
For which your heart was hungry; foe nor friend  
Could choose but see it, and that the food desired  
Must be but mortal to you. Think on this,  
How you came hither crowned these six years gone  
In this same summer month, and with what friends  
Girt round about and guarded with what hopes,  
And to a land how loving; and these years,  
These few brief years, have blown from off your  
boughs

All blossom of that summer, though nor storm  
Nor fire from heaven hath wrecked nor wind laid  
low

That stately tree that shadowed a glad land,  
But now being inly gnawn of worms to death  
And made a lurking-place for poisonous things  
To breed and fester at its rotten root,  
The axe is come against it. None save you  
Could have done this, to turn all hearts and hands  
That were for love's sake laid before your feet  
To fire and iron whetted and made hot  
To war against you. No man lives that knows  
What is your cause, and loathes not; though for  
craft

Or hope of vantage some that know will seem  
To know not, and some eyes be rather blind

Than see what eyeless ignorance in its sleep,  
If but it would, must needs take note of ; none  
Whose mind is maimed not by his own mere will  
And made perforce of its own deed perverse  
Can read this truth awry. What have you done ?  
Men might weep for you, yea, beholding it  
The eyes of angels melt ; no tide of tears  
Could wash from hand or soul the sinful sign  
That now stands leprous there ; albeit God knows  
Myself for very pity could be glad  
By mine own loss to ransom you, and set  
Upon your soul again the seal of peace  
And in your hand its empire ; but your act  
Has plucked out of men's hearts that fain would  
keep

The privilege of mercy ; God alone  
Can lose not that for ever, but retains  
For all sins done that cry for judgment here  
The property of pity, which in man  
Were mere compliance and confederacy  
With the sin pardoned ; so shall you do best,  
Being thus advised, to entertain the hope  
Of nothing but God's mercy, and henceforth  
Seek that as chiefest refuge ; for in man  
There shall no trust deliver you, nor free  
Body nor soul from bonds. Weep not for that ;  
But let your tears be rather as were hers  
That wept upon the feet of God, and bought  
With that poor price her pardon.

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QUEEN

So should I,  
If grief more great may buy it than any of theirs

That had sinned more than I ; nay, such have been  
And have been pardoned. I have done ill, and  
given

My name for shame to feed on, put mine honour  
Into mine enemies' keeping, made my fame  
A prey and pasture for the teeth of scorn ;  
I dare not say I wist not by what mean  
I should be freed of one that marred my life,  
Who could by no mean else be quit of him  
Save this blind way of blood ; yet men there were  
More wise than I, men much less wronged of him,  
That led me to it and left me ; but indeed  
I cite not them to extenuate by strange aid  
Mine own rash mind and unadvisedness  
That brought forth fruit of death ; yet must you  
know

What counsels led me by the hand, and whence  
My wrath was fostered ; and how all alone,  
How utterly uncomforted, and girt  
With how great peril, when the man was slain,  
I stood and found not you to counsel me,  
And no man else that loved ; and in such need  
If I did ill to seek to that strong hand  
Which had for me done evil, if evil it were  
To avenge me of mine enemy, what did they  
That by their hands and voices on his side  
Put force on me to wed him ? yet I say not  
I was indeed enforced ; I will not mock  
With one false plea my penitent heart, nor strive  
With words to darken counsel, nor incense  
By foolishness your wisdom, to provoke  
A judgment heavier than I wait for ; nay,  
You have not said that bitter thing of me  
That I may dare unsay ; what most I would,

I must deny not ; yet I pray you think,  
Even as might God, being just, what cause I had,  
What plea to lighten my sore load of sin,  
Mismated and miscounselled, and had seen  
Of my sad life not wholly nineteen years  
When I came hither crowned ; as yet would God  
Your head, my brother, had endured for mine  
That heaviness of honour, and this hand  
The weight of Scotland, that being laid in mine  
Has fallen and left it maimed, and on my brows  
A mark as his whose temples for his crime  
Were ringed with molten iron. Take them now,  
Though but for pity of me that pray you take,  
And bear them better than I did ; for me,  
Though no plea serve me in the sight of man  
Nor grace excuse my fault, I am yet content,  
If I may live but so much time in bonds  
As may suffice for God to pardon me,  
Who shall not long put off to pardon, then  
Shut eyes and sleep to death.

## MURRAY

I had thought to-night  
To speak no more with you, but let that hope  
Which only in God's name I gave you bear  
What fruit it might with prayer and watching ; yet  
Take comfort, and assure yourself of life,  
And, if it may be, honour ; one of these  
I may take on me, to redeem, and one  
So as I may will I preserve from death  
Dealt of men's tongues that murder it ; but you,  
Keep these things in your heart ; that if you raise  
Within this realm a faction, or devise

To break these bonds, I shall not keep an hour  
This power I have to save you ; nor shall keep,  
If France or England be by word of yours  
Stirred up to strike at our frail peace ; nor yet  
If you shall cleave to him that should for shame  
As from this land be cast out from your heart ;  
But if toward God your faults be faithfully  
In good men's sight acknowledged, and that life  
You led with your false lord and all sins past  
Loathed and lamented, and in days to be  
The living purpose in you manifest  
Of a more modest habit and a life  
More nobly fashioned—if the slaughter done  
On your dead husband seem of you abhorred  
And those ill days misliked wherein your fame  
Drank mortal poison from his murderer's hand—  
If this be seen, and that your mind lives clear  
From counsel of revenge upon those lords  
Who sought your reformation, nor with hope  
Nor dangerous forethought of device to be  
Renews itself to do them some day wrong ;  
Then may you now sit safe, and unproved  
Expect an end of bondage ; for at large  
You cannot think to live yet, who in time  
May haply by repentance be restored  
And for your prison somewhere here endured  
Find yet your throne again, and sit renewed  
More royal than men wist who saw the ship  
Put in from France that bore you.

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QUEEN

O my friend,

O brother, found now father to me too,

Who have raised and rebegotten me from death,  
By how much less I thank you for my life  
Think so much more for honour I give thanks  
That you raise up the hope in me to have  
Which was nigh dead for shame. O, let me hold  
*[Embracing him.]*

My comfort in mine arms, and with dumb lips  
Kiss you my thanks ; I looked for less than this,  
But yet for comfort of you. One thing more,  
Having so much, will I require, and cease--  
Even for my son's sake and mine own to lay  
The charge upon you of this regency  
Which none might bear so noble, nor bring back  
Her peace again to Scotland, as I know  
Your hand shall bring ; and had I known betimes  
I had not started from its curb aside  
Nor set against its strength in no good hour  
The feebleness of mine : but if your heart  
Be large enough to let forgiveness in  
Of my wrongs done and days of wanton will,  
Take this charge too, to keep for me the forts  
Of all that was my kingdom ; I would have  
Nothing of mine lie now not in your hand ;  
Keep too my jewels ; all I had of worth,  
What help without you should I have of it,  
What profit or what surety ? let your heart  
Cast her not out who prays you of your grace  
Take these in trust and me.

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MURRAY

I may not these,  
But you that put yourself into my trust  
I will not fail.

QUEEN

Nay, you shall keep them too.

MURRAY

I would not put my hand forth uncompelled  
To take for life and death the burden up  
That burns as fire and bows the back that bears  
As with an iron load ; and certainly  
He that shall take this kingdom on his hand  
I think shall live not long ; nor pride nor hope  
But very love and strong necessity  
Could only bow me down to obey their will  
Who should enforce on mine the task to bear  
This grievous office, that if Scotland bid  
I for her sake must bear till I may die.  
But if I be not bidden, for no love  
Or fear or lust of kingdom will I seek  
The labour and the grief of that great charge  
That I may live and feel not.

QUEEN

By my lips,  
That have no royal right to speak for her  
Now, think that yet she bids you, seeing none else  
To undo mine evil done on her, and heal  
The wounds mine enemies and myself have made  
In her sweet peace : she hath no stay but you ;  
Whom other should she seek to ? and for me  
Again I dare not urge you, but my heart  
Is turned into a prayer that pleads with yours  
To lend its weakness comfort of your strength  
By taking off its fears ; these that break mine  
Can bow not yours : O, take from me that weight

Which were to you but sport and ornament,  
The natural honour of a hand so strong  
And spirit elect of all men's souls alive  
To do a work imperial.

MURRAY

If not else,  
 But by me only may this land find peace,  
 By me then shall it ; for your private charge,  
 Impute not to me for default of love  
 That I beseech you lay no more on me  
 Than public need enforces ; in my trust  
 Your treasures were no safer than they stand  
 Now that I keep them not, and no man's tongue  
 Can tax me with them as detained from you  
 By fraud or usurpation ; which mine ear  
 Were loth to know was muttered.

QUEEN

But you see  
Nor they nor I have surety save in you ;  
Let it be seen of them that else may doubt  
How thankfully I trust you ; even for that  
Do thus, to do me good in men's report  
When they shall see us at one ; from mine own hand  
Except you take them shall they not be rent  
By craft or force of hidden or harrying hands  
That could not wrest from yours what mine must yield  
For fault of you to help me ?

**MURRAY**

As you will.  
I would not cross you where I might content,  
Yet willingly I cannot take on me



More charge than needs of privy trusts to keep  
That brings men's blame about them ; but in this  
My will shall be your servant.

*Re-enter* LADY LOCHLEVEN *and* GEORGE DOUGLAS

For this time  
I take farewell ; be patient, and seek peace  
Whence God may send it.—To your gentler hand,  
While yet the Lady Mary lives in ward,  
Behoves not me commend her, being but bound  
As reverently as may beseem your son  
In the state's name to charge you that she find  
At all men's hands that guard her now about  
Good usage with safe keeping ; which to assure  
Shall hardly need this young man's service here,  
For whom the state has other use, and I  
A worthier work than still to keep such watch  
As porters use or pages.

LADY LOCHLEVEN

He and I  
Stand at your bidding ; yet were nowise loth  
The state that gave should take this charge away  
It laid upon us.

QUEEN

Sir, the grace you brought  
And comfort to me sorrowing and afraid  
Go ever with you ; and farewell. ●

MURRAY

Farewell.

[*Exeunt* LADY LOCHLEVEN *and* MURRAY.]

QUEEN

Will you not go?

GEORGE DOUGLAS

Whither you bid, and when,  
I will go swiftly.

QUEEN

With your lord and mine,  
I would have said ; yet irks it me to say  
My lord, who had none under heaven, and was  
Of these my lords once lady. Said I not  
You should do well to cast off care of me  
Whom you must leave indeed now at command  
More powerful of more potent lips than mine ?  
I would not have you set your younger will  
Against his word imperial ; nor, I think,  
Doth he fear that who bids us come and go  
And whose great pleasure is that you part hence  
And I sit here : be patient, and seek peace,  
You heard him bid me ; patience we must have  
If we would rest obedient ; and for peace,  
So haply shall we find it, having learnt  
What rest is in submission.

GEORGE DOUGLAS

Bid me stay,  
And that my will shall part not hence alive  
What need I swear ?

QUEEN

Alas, your will may stay,  
Your will may wait on me to do me good,  
Your loves and wishes serve me when yourself

Shall live far off ; our lord forbids them not ;  
It is the service of your present hand,  
The comfort of your face, help of your heart,  
That he forbids me.

GEORGE DOUGLAS

And though God forbade  
Save by my death he should compel me not  
To do this bidding ; only by your mouth  
Of all that rule in heaven and earth will I  
Be willingly commanded.

QUEEN

You must go.  
Nay, I knew that ; how should one stay by me ?  
There was not left me, by God's wrath or man's,  
One friend when I came hither in the world ;  
And from the waste and wilderness of grief  
If one grain ripen—from the stone and sand  
If one seed blossom—if my misery find  
One spring on earth to assuage its fiery lip—  
How should I hope that God or man will spare  
To trample or to quench it ?

GEORGE DOUGLAS

I am here  
While you shall bid me live, and only hence  
When you shall bid me but depart and die.

QUEEN

There was a time when I would dream that men  
There were to do my bidding ; such as loved  
And were beloved again, and knew not fear



Than my soul's going from forth my body were,  
I would not set my face from hence alive.

## QUEEN

I hold it not for no part of my grief  
To bid you from me ; yet being here bound in  
As I with walls and waters, we should find  
Less help than yet I hope for of your hand  
Being hence enlarged. We will take counsel, sir,  
And choose, with no large choice to make of friends,  
To whom we shall appoint you, by what mean  
To deal for our deliverance : as with one  
Once of my household and this lady's kin  
Who here of all my Maries the last left  
Partakes my bonds : the Laird of Ricarton,  
My husband's kinsman ; and what readiest friends  
Once more may be raised up, as when I fled  
From shame and peril and a prison-house  
As hateful as these bonds, to find on earth—  
Ah, no such love and faith as yours in man.

SCENE V. *Holyrood*MURRAY *and* MORTON

## MURRAY

I am vexed with divers counsels, and my will  
Sees nor its way nor end. This act proclaimed  
That seals the charge of murder on the queen  
To justify our dealing had to it hands  
That here first met ; Kirkaldy with Glencairn,

Balfour with Maitland, Huntley with Argyle,  
True man with traitor, all were as one mind,  
One tongue to tax her with complicity,  
Found art and part with them that slew her lord ;  
Men praised the council for this judgment given  
As from a single and a resolute soul ;  
Scarce one withstood save Herries, and his voice  
Was as a wind that sings in travellers' ears  
Unheeded ; then the doom that gives to death  
All that in act maintain the former faith  
And writes for Catholic traitor, should have purged  
The state of treacherous or of dangerous friends  
Such as made protest then against this law  
And fled from our part to the Hamiltons,  
Caithness and Athol, with the bishop called  
Of Murray, whom the Assembly met to judge  
By one same doom has with Argyle condemned  
To stand in sackcloth for adulteries past  
At Stirling through the time of service held  
Within the chapel royal ; such men's stay  
It irks not me to lose, who by their loss  
Were fain to win their enemies for my friends  
More fast and faithful : but men's sundering minds  
Nor council nor assembly can reknit,  
Though Knox there sit by Maitland, and Balfour  
Touch sides with Craig ; and while the state as now  
Lives many-minded and distraught of will,  
How shall its hope be stable ?

MORTON

Some there are  
Have all their will, or more than we that rule  
By secular wit and might ; the preachers reign

With heavier hand than ours upon the state,  
Who in this late assembly by their doom  
Bade your fair sister of Argyle partake  
The sackcloth penance of her slippery lord  
For scandal to the Kirk done when last year  
At the font's edge her arms sustained our prince  
For baptism of such hands as served the mass ;  
If it have leave long to sit lawgiver,  
Their purity will pinch us.

## MURRAY

Have no fear ;  
It shall not Douglas : and we lack their help  
Who sway the commons only with their breath,  
Now most of all when our high counsels fail  
And hopes are turned as 'twere to running streams  
That flow from ours to feed our enemies' hands  
With washings of our wreck, waifs of our strength,  
That melts as water from us ; those chief twain  
Whose league I sought by marriage, and had hope  
To bind them to us as brethren, when Argyle  
With me should knit himself anew, to wed  
His brother to the sister of my wife  
With happier hope than he espoused mine own,  
While Huntley's son should lead my daughter home,  
And with this fourfold knot our loves be tied  
And fortunes with each other's growth ingrafted—  
Both these look back now toward the Hamiltons  
To mingle factions with them, being assured  
Our hands now lack the secret sword we had  
To draw at need against them, since their names  
Set at Craigmillar to the bond of blood  
Are with that bond consumed, and no tongue left

To wag in witness of their part of guilt  
Now Bothwell's knaves are hanged that laid the  
train

And Hay with them, and one most near his trust,  
His kinsman Hepburn, from whose mouth condemned

And Ormiston's we have confession wrung  
That marks with blood as parcel of their deed  
More than Balfour that in the assembly sit  
And must partake his surety ; this, my lord,  
Craves of us care and counsel, that our names  
Be writ not fool or coward, who took in hand  
Such trust to work such treason.

MORTON

Nay, no Scot  
Shall say we fell from faith or treacherously  
Let men's hopes fade that trusted us, and sank  
Through feebleness of ours ; yet have we strength  
To lower the height of heart and confidence  
That makes their faction swell, who were but late  
Too faint of spirit, too fearful and unsure,  
To be made firm with English subsidies ;  
Three thousand marks that Scrope by secret hand  
Sent from Carlisle to Herries could not serve  
To give or shape or sinew to their plots  
Who are now so great their house's heir must wed  
No lowlier than a queen, and Bothwell's wife,  
For this divorced or widowed.

MURRAY

Ay ; we know  
The archbishop his good uncle with this youth



Hath in Dumbarton fortified himself,  
And while they there sit strong and high in hope  
Our prisoner and our penitent late, we hear,  
Grows blithe of mood and wanton ; from her sight  
Have I dismissed my mother's youngest born,  
Lest in her flatteries his weak faith be snared  
And strangled with a smile ; and for her hand  
I have found a fitter suitor than Arbroath  
When she shall wed again, within whose veins  
Some drops of blood run royal as her own ;  
Methuen, whose grandsire was the third that set  
His ring on that Queen Margaret's wedded hand  
From the seventh Henry sent ambassadress  
To our fourth James, to bring for bridal gift  
Her father's love and England's to her lord  
And with the kiss of marriage on his lips  
To seal that peace which with her husband's life  
Found end at Flodden from her brother's hand  
That split the heart of Scotland. So the queen,  
If she wed Methuen, shall espouse a man  
Whose father of the same queen's womb was born  
That bore her father ; and whose blood as hers  
Is lineal from the seed of English kings  
Through one same mother's sons, queen once of  
Scots

And daughter born and sister, though unqueened,  
Of those twain Henries that made peace and war  
With Scotland and her lord ; and by this match  
The Hamiltons being frustrate of their hope  
Could yet not tax us with a meaner choice  
Than they would make for her, who while she lives  
Must stand thenceforth far off from their designs  
And disallied from all that in her name  
Draw now to head against us ; and some help

We need the more to cross them now, that France,  
To whom I thought to seek as to my friend  
And thence find aid in this necessity  
That else finds none, since England's jealous craft  
Puts in our enemies' hands gold for a sword  
More sharp than steel—France, that would send at  
need

The choice of all her sons that hold our faith  
To live and die beside us here in arms,  
Grows chillier toward us than the changing wind  
That brings back winter : for the brood of Guise,  
Our prisoner's friends and kinsmen of Lorraine,  
Prevail again on Catherine's adverse part,  
Whose hate awhile gives way to them, and yields  
Our cause into their hands that were more like  
To help this daughter of their dangerous house  
Take up the crown resigned and through their  
strength

Renew this kingdom's ruin with her reign,  
Than send us aid and arms to guard its peace  
From inroad as from treason : which I doubt  
We shall hear news of from my brother's tongue

*Enter* SIR WILLIAM DOUGLAS

Who comes without a herald.

SIR W. DOUGLAS

Sir, the news  
Is dashed with good and evil equally  
That here I bring you ; for the treasons laid  
Have missed their mark and left unwounded yet

My house's honour that retains in trust  
So great a charge. You had word ere this of me  
By what strange fortune was their plot made known  
Who thought to fall upon us unaware  
And find a ferry for some seventy swords  
To cross the lake in mine own barge surprised  
And smite those thirty guards that hold the walls  
And make a murderous passage for the queen  
To come forth free with feet that walked in blood ;  
And how by one a Frenchman of her train  
Who being not in their counsel heard some speech  
Of such a preparation, and conceived  
This was a plot to take her from your hand  
Laid by the fiercer faction of the Kirk  
That sought to snare and slay her in your despite,  
To me was all discovered ; and betimes  
I gave command no barge thenceforth should pass  
Between the main shore and mine island walls,  
But a skiff only that with single oars  
Might be rowed over. Baffled thus, her friends  
Were fain to buy the boatman's faith with gold,  
Whom on suspicion I dismissed, but since  
Finding less trust and service in the knave  
That had his place, called back and bade take heed  
Of these that would have won to their device  
A foundling page within my castle bred  
And called by mine own name ; who by this plot  
Should have seduced for them my sentinels  
And oped the gate by night ; but yet I find  
For all toils set and gins to take their faith  
In him and them no treason ; yet so near  
Was treason to us, that not long since the queen  
Had wellnigh slipped beyond our guard by day  
In habit of a laundress that was hired

So to shift raiment with her ; but being forth  
Betimes as was this woman's use to come  
In the low light by dawn, at such an hour  
As she was wont to sleep the morning out,  
The fardel in her hand of clothes brought forth  
And on her face the muffler, it befell  
That as she sat before the rowers and saw  
Some half her free brief way of water past,  
By turn of head or lightning of her look  
For mirth she could not hide and joyous heart,  
Or but by some sweet note of majesty,  
Some new bright bearing and imperious change  
From her false likeness, so she drew their eyes  
That one who rowed, saying merrily *Let us see*  
*What manner of dame is this*, would fain pluck down  
Her muffler, who to guard it suddenly  
Put up her fair white hands, which seeing they knew  
And marvelled at her purpose ; she thereat,  
A little wroth but more in laughter, bared  
Her head and bade stretch oars and take the land  
On their lives' peril ; which regarding not,  
They straight put back as men amazed, but swore  
To keep fast locked from mine of all men's eyes  
The secret knowledge of this frustrate craft,  
So set her down on the island side again  
With muffled head and hidden hands, to wring  
And weep apart for passion, where my watch  
Looks now more strict upon her ; but I think,  
For all her wrath and grief to be by chance  
From her near hope cast down and height of mind  
Wherein she went'forth laughingly to find  
What good might God bring of her perilous hour,  
She hath lost not yet nor changed that heart nor hope,  
But looks one day to mock us.

MURRAY

So I think ;  
And in that fear would have you keep fast watch  
By night and day till we take off the charge  
Laid on your faith, and or enfranchise her  
Or change her place of ward ; which, ere the spring  
That holds in chase this winter's flying foot  
Be turned to summer, haply shall be done.  
What fashion holds our mother with the queen ?

SIR W. DOUGLAS

As she was ever tender of her state  
And mild in her own office, so she keeps  
Observance yet and reverence more than meet  
Save toward a queen, toward this her guest enforced  
Who smiles her back a prisoner's thanks, and sighs  
That she should smile in prison ; but 'twixt whiles  
Some change of mood will turn to scorn or spleen  
Her practised patience, and some word take wing  
Forth from her heart's root through her lips that hath  
The gall of asps within it ; yet not this  
Turns the heart hard or bitter that awaits  
Her gentler change, pitying the wrong it bears  
And her that wrongs it for the sorrow's sake  
That chafes and rends her.

MURRAY

Pity may she give  
And be praised for it ; but to entertain  
Hope or desire that wars against her trust  
Should turn that praise to poison. Have you seen  
Since George went thence, or noted ere he went,

In her no token of a mingled mind  
That sways 'twixt faith and such a faithless hope  
As feeds a mother's love with deadly dreams  
Of prophesying ambition? for in him  
I spied the sickness of a tainted heart  
And fever-fired from the most mortal eyes  
That ever love drank death of.

SIR W. DOUGLAS

No, my lord.

MURRAY

I would fain trust her mind were whole in this  
And her thoughts firm; yet would not trust too far,  
Who know what force of fraud and fire of will  
In that fierce heart and subtle, without fear,  
That God hath given so sweet a hiding-place,  
Make how much more the peril and the power  
Of birth and kinglier beauty, that lay wait  
For her son's sake to tempt her. We will hold  
More speech of this; here shall you rest to-night.  
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VI. *Lochleven Castle*

*The* QUEEN *and* MARY BEATON

« QUEEN

Is it not sunset? what should ail the day  
To hang so long in heaven? the world was blind  
By this time yesternight. The lake gleams yet;

Will the sun never sink, for all the weight  
That makes this hour so heavy ?

MARY BEATON

While you speak,  
The outer gate that stands till nightfall wide  
Shuts on the sundown ; and they bring the keys  
That soon the page shall put into our hand  
To let in freedom.

QUEEN

I could weep and laugh  
For fear and hope and angry joy and doubt  
That wring my heart. I am sick at once and well :  
Shall I win past them in this handmaid's dress  
If we be spied ? My hood is over broad ;  
Help me to set it forward ; and your own  
Sits loose ; but pluck it closer on your face  
For cloak and cover from the keen moon's eye  
That peers against us. Twice, thou knowest, yea  
thrice,  
God has betrayed me to mine enemies' hands  
Even when my foot was forth ; if it slip now,  
He loves nor kings that hold his office here  
Nor his own servants, but those faithless mouths  
That mock all sovereignties in earth or heaven.  
If here he fail me and I fall again  
To sit in bonds a year—by God's own truth,  
I swear I will not keep this wall of flesh  
To cage my spirit within these walls of stone,  
But break this down to set that free from these,  
That being delivered of men's wrongs and his  
It may stand up, and gazing in his eyes  
Accuse him of my traitors.

MARY BEATON

Keep good heart ;  
Your hope before was feverish and too light,  
And so it failed you : in this after plot  
There is more form and likeness than in those  
That left you weeping ; let not passion now  
Foil your good fortune twice, or heat of mood  
From keen occasion take the present edge  
And blunt the point of fortune.

QUEEN

If I knew  
This man were faithful—O, my heart that was  
Is melted from me, and the heart I have  
Is like wax melting. Were my feet once free,  
It should be strong again ; here it sinks down  
As a dead fire in ashes. Dare we think  
I shall find faith in him, who have not found  
In all the world ? no man of mine there is,  
None of my land or blood, but hath betrayed,  
Betrayed or left me.

MARY BEATON

Nay, too strange it were  
That you should come to want men's faith, and look  
For love of man in vain ; these were your jewels,  
You cannot live to lack them ; nay, but less ;  
Your common ornaments to wear and leave,  
Your change of raiment to cast off, and bind  
A fresher robe about you : while men live  
And you live also, these must give you love,  
And you must use it.



## QUEEN

So one told me once—  
That I must use and lose it. If my time  
Be come to need man's love and find it not,  
I have known death make a prophet of a man  
That living could foretell but his own end,  
Not save himself, being foolish ; and I too,  
I am mad as he was, now to think on him  
Or my dead follies. Were these walls away,  
I should no more ; ay, when this strait is past,  
I shall win back my wits and my blithe heart,  
And make good cheer again.

*Enter Page*

## PAGE

Here are the keys ;  
I had wrought instead a ladder for our need  
With two strong oars made fast across, for fear  
I had failed at last from under my lord's eye  
To sweep them off the board-head ; here they ring,  
As joy-bells here to give your highness note  
The skiff lies moored on the island's lee, and waits  
But till the castle boats by secret hands  
Be stripped of oars and rowlocks, and pursuit  
Made helpless, maimed of all its means ; the crew  
Is ready that shall lend us swifter wing  
Than one man's strength to fly with ; and beyond  
Your highness' friends upon the further bank  
Wait with my master's horses ; never was  
A fairer plot or likelier.

## QUEEN

How thy face

Lightens ! Poor child, what knowest thou of the  
chance

That cast thee on my fortunes ? it may be  
To death ere life break bud, and thy poor flower  
The wind of my life's tempest shall cut off,  
And blow thy green branch bare. Many there be  
Have died, and many that now live shall die,  
Ere my life end, for my life's sake ; and none  
There is that knows, of all that love or hate,  
What end shall come of this night's work, and what  
Of all my life-days. I shall die in bonds  
Perchance, a bitter death ; yet worse it were  
To outlive dead years in prison, and to loathe  
The life I could not lose. This will not be ;  
No days and nights shall I see wax and wane,  
Kindled and quenched in bondage, any more ;  
For if to-night I stand not free on earth  
As the sun stands in heaven, whose sovereign eye  
Next day shall see me sovereign, I shall live  
Not one day more of darkling life, as fire  
Pent in a grate, bound in with blackening bars,  
But like a star by God hurled forth of heaven  
Fall, and men's eyes be darkened, and the world  
Stand heart-struck, and the night and day be changed  
That see me falling. If I win not forth,  
But, flying, be taken of the hands that were  
Before laid on me, they shall never think  
To hold me more in fetters, but take heart  
To do what earth saw never yet, and lay  
By doom and sentence on their sovereign born  
Death ; I shall find swift judgment, and short shrift

My justicers shall give me ; so at least  
Shall I be quit of bondage. Come, my friends,  
That must divide with me for death or life  
This one night's issue : be it or worst or best,  
Yet have ye no worse fortune than a queen,  
Or she than ye no better. On this hour  
Hang all those hours that yet we have to live :  
Let us go forth to pluck the fruit of this  
That leans now toward our hand. My heart is light ;  
Be yours not heavier ; for your eyes and mine  
Shall look upon these walls and waves no more.  
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VII. *The Shore of Loch Leven*

GEORGE DOUGLAS, BEATON, RICARTON, *with*  
*Attendants*

GEORGE DOUGLAS

I hear the beat of the oars : they make no haste :  
How the stars thicken ! if a mist would take  
The heaven but for an hour and hide them round——

RICARTON

How should they steer then straight ? we lacked but  
light,  
And these are happy stars that sign this hour  
With earnest of good fortune ; and betimes  
See by their favour where the prize we seek  
Is come to port.

*Enter the QUEEN, MARY BEATON, Page, and a Girl attending*

QUEEN

Even such a night it was  
I looked again for to deliver me,  
Remembering such a night that broke my bonds  
Two wild years past that brought me through to this;  
The wind is loud beneath the mounting moon,  
And the stars merry. Noble friends, to horse ;  
When I shall feel my steed exult with me,  
I will give thanks for each of your good deeds  
To each man's several love. I know not yet  
That I stand here enfranchised ; for pure joy  
I have not laid it yet to heart ; methinks  
This is a lightning in my dreams to-night  
That strikes and is not, and my flattered eyes  
Must wake with dawn in bonds. Douglas, I pray,  
If it be not but as a flash in sleep  
And no true light now breaking, tell me you,  
That were my prison's friend ; I will believe  
I am free as fire, free as the wind, the night,  
All glad fleet things of the airier element  
That take no hold on earth ; for even like these  
Seems now the fire in me that was my heart  
And is a song, a flame, a burning cloud  
That moves before the sun at dawn, and fades  
With fierce delight to drink his breath and die.  
If ever hearts werę stabbed with joy to death,  
This that cleaves mine should do it, and one sharp  
stroke  
Pierce through the thrilled and trembling core like steel  
And cut the roots of life. Nay, I am crazed,

To stand and babble like one mad with wine,  
Stung to the heart and bitten to the brain  
With this great drink of freedom ; O, such wine  
As fills man full of heaven, and in his veins  
Becomes the blood of gods. I would fain feel  
That I were free a little, ere that sense  
Be put to use ; those walls are fallen for me,  
Those waters dry, those gaolers dead, and this  
The first night of my second reign, that here  
Begins its record. I will talk no more  
Nor waste my heart in joyous words, nor laugh  
To set my free face toward the large-eyed sky  
Against the clear wind and the climbing moon,  
And take into mine eyes and to my breast  
The whole sweet night and all the stars of heaven,  
But put to present work the heart and hand  
That here rise up a queen's. Bring me to horse ;  
We will take counsel first of speed, and then  
Take time for counsel.

BEATON

Madam, here at hand  
The horses wait : Lord Seyton rides with us  
Hence to Queen's Ferry, where beyond the Forth  
We reach Claude Hamilton, who with fresh steeds  
Expects us ; to Long Niddry thence, and there  
Draw rein among the Seytons, ere again  
We make for Hamilton, whose walls should see  
The sun and us together.

QUEEN

Well devised.  
Where is the girl that fled with us, and gave

These garments for my surety? she shall have  
Her part in my good hour, that in mine ill  
Did me good service.

RICARTON

Madam, she must stay ;  
We have not steeds enough, and those we have  
May bear no load more than perforce they must,  
Or we not hope to speed.

QUEEN

Nay, she shall go,  
Not bide in peril of mine enemies here  
While we fly scatheless hence.

GIRL

Most gracious queen,  
Of me take no such care : I am well content  
They should do with me all they would, and I  
Live but so long to know my queen as safe  
As I for her die gladly.

RICARTON

She says well ;  
Get we to horse. I must ride south to rouse  
My kinsfolk, and with all our Hepburn bands  
Seize on Dunbar ; whence northward I may bear  
Good tidings to your lord.

QUEEN

God make them good  
That he shall hear of me, and from his mouth

Send me good words and comfort ! You shall ride  
Straight from Lord Seyton's with my message borne  
To all good soldiers of your clan and mine  
And wake them for our common lord's dear love  
To strike once more, or never while they live  
Be called but slaves and kinless : then to him  
For whom the bonds that I put off to-night  
Were borne and broken. Douglas, of that name  
Most tender and most true to her that was  
Of women most unfriended, and of queens  
Most abject and unlike to recompense,  
Take in your hand the hand that it set free,  
And lead me as you led me forth of bonds  
To my more perfect freedom. Sirs, to horse. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VIII. *Hamilton Castle*

*The* QUEEN, ARGYLE, *and* HUNTLEY

QUEEN

I ever thought to find your faiths again  
When time had set me free ; nor shall my love  
To my good friends be more unprofitable  
Than was my brother's, from whose promised hand  
Both have withdrawn the alliance of your own  
To plight once more with mine : your son, my lord,  
And, noble sir, your brother, will not fail  
Of worthier wedlock and of trustier ties  
Than should have bound them to a traitor's blood,  
His daughter, and the sister of his wife,  
Whom he so thought to honour, and in them  
Advance his counsels and confirm his cause

Through your great names allied, who now take  
part

More worthily with one long overthrown  
And late rerisen with many a true man's more  
And royally girt round with many a friend's ;  
Nor need we lay upon our kinsmen here  
All our hope's burden, nor submit our hand  
To marriage with our cousin's of Arbroath  
For fault of other stay. For mine own mind,  
I would stand rather on Dumbarton rock  
Walled in with Fleming's spears, than here sit fast  
With these six thousand ranged about the walls  
That five days' suns have brought to strengthen me  
Since I fled hither in these poor same weeds  
That yet for need I wear. Now, by the joy  
I had that night to feel my horse beneath  
Bound like my heart that through those darkling  
ways

Shot sunwards to the throne, I do not think  
Thus to sit long at wait, who have the hands  
Subscribed here of so many loyal lords  
To take no thought but of their faith to me  
Nor let dissension touch their hearts again  
Till I sit crowned as arbitress of all  
When the great cause is gained. Each bloodless day  
Makes our foes greater ; from Dunbar Lord Hume,  
Who thence with hand too swift cut off our friends,  
Brings now six hundred to my brother's flag  
Who hangs hard by us, and from Edinburgh  
Grange leads his hundreds ; all the Glasgow folk,  
For love of Lennox, with the Lothian carles,  
Draw round their regent hither ; and God knows  
These are no cowards nor men vile esteemed  
That stand about him ; better is he served



Of them than we of Herries, whose false wit  
Works with an open face and a close heart  
For other ends than live upon his tongue  
And fill with protestation those loud lips  
That plead and swear on both sides ; he would stand  
My counsellor, yet has not craft enough  
To draw those enemies hence that watch us here  
By tumult raised along the border side  
For none to quell but Murray, who was bound  
From Glasgow where he lies yet to Dumfries,  
But halts to gather head and fall on us  
When we set forth ; which by my private will  
I would not yet, but that my kinsmen yearn  
To bid him battle and with victory won  
Seize to themselves the kingdom by my hand,  
Which they should wield then at their will, and wed  
To their next heir's ; so should ye have their seed  
For kings of Scotland, who were leagued ere this  
With our main foes, and to their hands but late  
By composition and confederacy  
Would have given up my life to buy their ends  
Even with the blood whose kinship in their veins  
They thought should make them royal.

## ARGYLE

We must fear

These days that fleet and bring us no more strength  
Bring to the regent comfort and good hope  
From England of a quiet hand maintained  
Upon the borders, and such present peace  
As fights against us there upon his side  
While he stands fast and gathers friends, who had  
But common guard about him when your grace  
Fled hither first, yet would not at the news

For dread of our near neighbourhood turn back  
With that thin guard to Stirling ; and by this  
The chiefs of all his part are drawn to him,  
Morton and Mar, Semple and Ochiltree,  
And they that wrung forth of your royal hand  
The writing that subscribed it kingdomless :  
All these are armed beneath him.

## QUEEN

These are strong,  
Yet are our friends not weaker ; twain alone,  
You twain with whom I speak, being on my side,  
I would not fear to bide the feud of these ;  
And here are Cassilis, Eglinton, Montrose,  
Ross, Crawford, Errol, Fleming, Sutherland,  
Herries with Maxwell, Boyd and Oliphant,  
And Livingstone, and Beaumont that was sent  
To speak for France as with mine uncle's tongue  
Pleading with those my traitors for that life  
Which here he finds enfranchised ; and all these  
As one true heart to me and faithful hand,  
In God's name and their honour's leagued as friends  
Who till mine enemies be cast down will know  
Nought save their duty to me, that no strife  
Shall rend in sunder, and no privy jar  
Rive one from other that stands fast by me.  
This have they sworn ; and by my trust in them,  
I will not doubt with favour or with force  
To quell the hardiest heart set opposite.  
Have I not sent forth word of amnesty  
To every soul in Scotland free save these,  
The top and crown of traitors, Morton first,  
And Lindsay, from whose hand I took a pledge  
To be redeemed with forfeit of his head ;

Semple, that writ lewd ballads of my love,  
And that good provost whom I swore to give  
For one night's prison given me in his house  
A surer gaol for narrower resting-place  
Than that wherein I rested not ; and last  
Balfour, that gave my lord's trust up and mine ?  
Upon these five heads fallen will I set foot  
When I tread back the stair that mounts my throne ;  
All others shall find grace ; yea, though their hearts  
Were set more stark against me and their hands  
More dangerous aimed than these ; for this God  
knows,

My heart more honours and shall ever love  
A hardy foe more than a coward friend ;  
And Hume and Grange, mine enemies well approved,  
Could love or recompense reknit their faiths  
To my forsworn allegiance, in mine eyes  
Should stand more clear than unrevolted men  
Whose trustless faith is further from my trust  
Than from my veins the nearness of their blood.  
I am not bitter-hearted, nor take pride  
To keep the record of wrongs done to me  
For privy hate to gnaw upon, and fret  
Till all its wrath be wroken ; I desire  
Not blood so much of them that seek mine own  
As victory on them, who being but subdued  
For me may live or die my subjects : this  
I care not if I win with liberal words  
Or weapons of my friends, for love or fear,  
Or by their own dissensions that may spring  
And blossom to my profit ; and I hold  
Nor fear nor grief grievous nor terrible  
That might buy victory to me, for whose sake  
Peril and pain seem pleasant, and all else



## QUEEN

My chance were ill  
If to no better love your loves gave way  
Than that which makes us friends.—You are come  
betimes,  
If you come ready now to ride ; here lie  
The letters you must bear : the cardinal's this,  
Mine uncle's of Lorraine, to whose kind hand  
Did I commend the first news of my flight  
Sent from Lord Seyton's while our horses breathed ;  
By this shall he receive my mind writ large  
And turn his own to help me. Look you say  
Even as I write, you left me in such mind  
As he would know me, for all past faults done  
Bent but to seek of God and of the world  
Pardon ; as knowing that none but only God  
Has brought me out of bonds, and inly fixed  
In perfect purpose for his mercy shown  
To show a thankful and a constant heart,  
As simple woman or as queen of Scots,  
In life and death fast cleaving to his Church,  
As I would have him that shall read believe  
My life to come shall only from his lips  
Take shape and likeness, by their breath alone  
Still swayed and steered ; to whom you know I look  
For reconciling words that may subdue  
To natural pity of my labouring cause  
The queen that was my mother and her son  
My brother king that in my husband's seat  
Sits lineal in succession. Say too this,  
That without help I may not hold mine own,  
And therefore shall he stand the more my friend  
And do the kindlier the more haste he makes

With all good speed to raise and to despatch  
A levy of a thousand harquebusmen  
To fill the want up of my ranks, that yet  
Look leaner than mine enemies'. This for France ;  
And this to the English queen delivering say,  
I look being free now for that help of hers  
That in my last year's bonds not once or twice  
I had by word of promise, and not doubt  
This year to have indeed : which if I may,  
When from her hand I take my crown again,  
I shall thenceforth look for no other friend  
And try no further faith. This private word  
In London to the ambassador of Spain  
Fail not to bear, that being set round with spies  
I may not write ; but he shall tell his king  
The charges that men cast on me are false,  
And theirs the guilt that held me in their bonds  
Who stand in spirit firm to one faith with him  
From whom I look for counsel. I well think  
My sister's love shall but desire to hold  
A mean betwixt our parties, and pronounce  
On each side judgment, as by right and might  
'Twixt mine and me the imperial mediatress,  
Commanding peace, controlling war, that must  
Determine this dark time and make alone  
An end of doubt and danger ; which perchance  
May come before her answer. Haste, and thrive.

[Exit BEATON.

Now, what say you? shall fortune stand our friend  
But long enough to seem worth hope or fear,  
Or fall too soon from us for hope to help  
Or fear to hurt more than an hour of chance  
Might make and unmake? This were now my day  
To try the soothsaying of men's second sight

Who read beyond the writing of the hour  
And utter things unborn ; now would I know,  
And yet I would not, how my life shall move  
And toward what end for ever ; which to know  
Should help me not to suffer, nor undo  
One jot that must be done or borne of me,  
Nor take one grain away. I would not know it ;  
For one thing haply might that knowledge do,  
Or one thing undo—to bring down the heart  
Wherewith I now expect it. We shall know,  
When we shall suffer, what God's hour will bring ;  
If filled with wrath full from his heavy hand,  
Or gently laid upon us. I do think,  
If he were wroth with aught once done of me,  
That anger should be now fulfilled, and this  
His hour of comfort ; for he should not stand,  
For his wrath's sake with me, mine enemies' friend,  
Who are more than mine his enemies. Never yet  
Did I desire to know of God or man  
What was designed me of them ; nor will now  
For fear desire the knowledge. What I may,  
That will I foil of all men's enmities,  
And what I may of hope and good success  
Take, and praise God. Yet thus much would I  
know,  
If in your sight, who have seen my whole life run  
One stream with yours since either had its spring,  
My chance to come look foul or fair again  
By this day's light and likelihood.

•

MARY BEATON

In sooth,  
No soothsayer am I, yet so far a seer,

That I can see but this of you and me,  
We shall not part alive.

## QUEEN

Dost thou mean well ?

Thou hast been constant ever at my hand  
And closest when the worst part of my fate  
Came closest to me ; firm as faith or love  
Hast thou stood by my peril and my pain,  
And still where I found these there found I thee,  
And where I found thee these were not far off.  
When I was proud and blithe (men said) of heart,  
And life looked smooth and loving in mine eyes,  
Thou wouldst be sad and cold as autumn winds,  
Thy face uncomfortable, and strange thy speech,  
Thy service joyless ; but when times grew hard,  
And there was wind and fire in the clear heaven,  
Then wast thou near ; thy service and thy speech  
Were glad and ready ; in thine eyes thy soul  
Seemed to sit fixed at watch as one that waits  
And knows and is content with what shall be.  
Nor can I tell now if thy sight should put  
More faith in me or fear, to trust or doubt  
The chance forefigured in thee ; for thou art  
As 'twere my fortune, faithful as man's fate,  
Inevitable ; I cannot read the roll  
That I might deem were hidden in thy hand  
Writ with my days to be, nor from thine eyes  
Take light to know ; for fortune too is blind  
As man that knows not of her, and thyself,  
That art as 'twere a type to me and sign  
Incognizable, art no more wise than I  
To say what I should hope or fear to learn,  
Or why from thee.



MARY BEATON

                  This one thing I know well  
That hope nor fear need think to feed upon,  
That I should part from you alive, or you  
Take from me living mine assurance yet  
To look upon you while you live, and trace  
To the grave's edge your printed feet with mine.

QUEEN

Wilt thou die too ?

MARY BEATON

                  Should I so far so long  
Follow my queen's face to forsake at last  
And lose my name for constancy ? or you  
Whose eyes alive have slain so many men  
Want when death shuts them one to die of you  
Dying, who had so many loving lives  
To go before you living ?

QUEEN

                  Thou dost laugh  
Always, to speak of death ; and at this time  
God wot it should beseem us best to smile  
If we must think upon him. I and thou  
Have so much in us of a single heart  
That we can smile to hear of that or see  
Which sickens and makes bleed faint hearts for fear ;  
And well now shall it stand us both in stead  
To make ours hard against all chance, and walk  
Between our friends and foes indifferently  
As who may think to see them one day shift

From hate to love and love again to hate  
As time with peaceable or warlike hand  
Shall carve and shape them ; and to go thus forth  
And make an end shall neither at my need  
Deject me nor uplift in spirit, who pass  
Not gladly nor yet lothly to the field  
That these my present friends have in my name  
Set for the trial of my death or life.  
Thou knowest long since God gave me cause to say  
I saw the world was not that joyous thing  
Which men would make it, nor the happiest they  
That lived the longest in it ; so I thought  
That year the mightiest of my kinsmen fell  
Slain by strong treason ; and these five years gone  
Have lightened not so much my life to me  
That I should love it more or more should loathe  
That end which love or loathing, faith or fear,  
Can put not back nor forward by a day.     [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IX.   *Langside*

MURRAY, MORTON, HUME, LINDSAY, OCHILTREE, SIR  
WILLIAM DOUGLAS, KIRKALDY, *and their Forces*

MURRAY

They cannot pass our place of vantage here  
To choose them out a likelier. Let our lines  
Lie close on either side the hollow strait  
Flanked as the hill slopes by those cottage walls,  
While here the head of our main force stands fast

With wings flung each way forth : that narrow  
street  
Shall take them snared and naked.

SIR W. DOUGLAS

I beseech you,  
If you suspect no taint or part in me  
Of treason in our kin, that I may have  
The first of this day's danger.

MURRAY

No man here  
Of all whose hearts are armed for Scotland hath  
First place in this day's peril, no man last,  
But all one part of peril and one place  
To stand and strike, if God be good to us,  
In the last field that shall be fought for her  
Upon this quarrel. Who are they that lead  
The main of the queen's battle ?

KIRKALDY

On their left  
Lord Herries, and Argyle in front ; with him  
Claude Hamilton and James of Evandale  
Bring up their turbulent ranks.

LINDSAY

Why, these keep none  
That crowd against us ; horse and mingled foot  
Confound each other hurtling as they come  
Sheer up between the houses.

MURRAY

Some default  
That maims the general strength has in their need  
Held them an hour delaying : our harquebusmen,  
Two thousand tried, the best half of our foot,  
Keep the way fast each side even to this height  
Where stands our strength in the open. We shall  
have,

If aught win through of all their chivalry,  
Some sharp half-hour of hand to hand at last  
Ere one thrust other from this brow. Lord Hume,  
Keep you the rear of our right wing that looks  
Toward Herries and his horsemen ; Ochiltree,  
Stand you beside him ; Grange and Lindsay here  
Shall bide with me the main front of their fight  
When these break through our guard. Let word be  
given

That no man when the day is won shall dare  
Upon our side to spill one drop of blood  
That may be spared of them that yield or fly. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE X. *Another part of the Field*

*Enter HERRIES and SEYTON, with their Soldiers*

HERRIES

If they of our part hold the hill-top yet,  
For all our leader's loss we have the day.

.

SEYTON

They stand this half-hour locked on both sides fast  
And grappling to the teeth. I would to God

When for faint heart and very fear Argyle  
Fell from his horse before the battle met  
The devil had writhed his neck round, whose delay  
At point to charge first maimed us ; else by this  
We had scattered them as crows. Make up again  
And drive their broken lines in on the rear  
While those in front stand doubtful. Charge once  
more,

*Enter OCHILTREE and HUME, with Soldiers*

And all this side is ours.—Lord Ochiltree,  
Yield, in the queen's name.

POCHILTREE

In the king's I stand  
To bid his traitors battle.  
[*They fight ; OCHILTREE falls.*

HERRIES

Stand thou too,  
Or give us place ; I had rather have to-day  
At my sword's end thee than a meaner man  
To try this cause.

HUME •

This edge of mine shall try  
Which side and steel be truer.  
[*They fight ; HUME is wounded.*

SEYTON

God and the queen !  
Set on ; this height once ours, this day is too,  
And all days after.

HERRIES

Halt not yet, good friends,  
Till with our bright swords we have crowned the hill  
Whereon they stand at grapple. Close again,  
And we ride lords at large of the free field  
Whence these fall hurled in sunder.

SEYTON

To the height !  
Our fellows are fast locked yet with our foes ;  
Make up there to their comfort.

*Enter* LINDSAY, KIRKALDY, SIR WILLIAM DOUGLAS,  
*young* OCHILTREE, *with Soldiers*

LINDSAY

Sirs, not yet ;  
Ere ye win through there be more spears to break  
Than there in fight are fastened. Stand, or yield.

HERRIES

The Highland folk that doubtfully held off  
Are fallen upon our flank ; hear you the noise ?  
Back, sirs, bear back : we are sped.  
*[Exit with his followers.]*

SEYTON

The day is gone ;  
Let life go after ; for I will not fly  
To meet my queen's face as a beaten man.

*Enter MURRAY, MORTON, &c., with Soldiers*

MURRAY

Charge once, and then sheathe swords ; the field is  
ours :

They fly now both ways broken. Some one spur  
To bid those knaves that howl upon the rear  
Cut short their quest of blood ; they were too slack  
Who are now so hot, when first the hunt was up ;  
They shall not flesh those fangs on flying men  
That in the fight were bloodless.

SEYTON

Men, stand fast ;  
Let not the currish cry of Highland hounds  
Bark on your fugitive quarry : here a man  
May fall not like a stag or harried hare,  
But die more soldierlike than in the toils  
With their loud pack upon him.

YOUNG OCHILTREE

• Die then here  
And pay me for my father, if God please  
My life with his shall lie not on thy hand,  
But thine on mine as forfeit. [*They fight* ; SEYTON *falls*.

MURRAY

Slay him not ;  
I say, put up your sword.

YOUNG OCHILTREE

Sir, pardon me ;  
There bleeds my father yet : he too shall die.

MURRAY

Young man, nor he nor any of his part  
When I say, Live. Take up your sword again ;  
And by this hand that struck it from your own  
Be ruled and learn what loyal use it hath,  
Which is not on its prisoner. Send forth word  
That none take life of any man that yields ;  
Pursue, but slay not ; for the day is won,  
And this last battle ended that shall see  
By Scottish hands the reek of Scotsmen slain  
Defame the face of Scotland. While I live,  
If God as on this day be good to her,  
Her eyes shall look on her own blood no more.  
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE XI. *The Heights near Langside*

*The* QUEEN, MARY BEATON, FLEMING, BOYD, *and*  
*young* MAXWELL

QUEEN

This is the last time I shall look on war :  
Upon this day I know my fate is set



As on a sword's point. Does the fight stand still,  
That we see nothing on that hill's brow stir  
Where both sides lashed together ?

FLEMING

If the light

Tell mine eyes truth that reel with watching, both  
Stand with spears crossed and locked so hard, and  
points  
So fast inwound with such inveteracy,  
That steel can thrust not steel an inch away  
Nor foot push foot a hair's breadth back that hangs  
On the hill's edge and yields not. Hark ! the noise  
Grows sharper and more various in its cry  
Than first it was ; there comes upon the day  
Some change for good or ill ; but for my charge,  
I would not say *Would God my hand were there*,  
But take its chance upon it.

QUEEN

Be content

To stand this day our soldier at her side  
Who will not live to lay such charge again  
On them that love her. Lo there, on the left  
They charge again from our part.

MAXWELL

There it is

My father fights ; his horse are they that make  
The hill's length rock and lighten as a sea ;  
Look where the waves meet as that wind of steeds  
Sweeps them together ; how they reel and fall

There with the shock from under of the storm  
That takes in rear and breaks their guard and leaves  
The right wing of the rebels cloven in twain,  
And in the cleft their first men fallen that stood  
Against the sea-breach. O, this gallant day  
Shows us our fortune fair as her fair face  
For whom we came to seek it, and the crown  
That it gives back more glorious.

QUEEN

How fares our van——Nay, go not from me one,  
Lest we be scattered.

BOYD

Hear you not a cry  
 As from the rear, a note of ruin, sent  
 Higher than the noise of horsemen? and therewith  
 A roar of fire as though the artillery there  
 Spake all at once its heart untimely out ;  
 Pray God our powder be not spent by chance  
 And in its waste undo us.

**QUEEN**

My heart is sick,  
Yet shall it not subdue me while my will  
Hath still a man's strength left. I was not thus—  
I will not think what<sup>e</sup>ver I have been.  
The worst day lasts no longer than a day,  
And its worst hour hath but an hour of life  
Wherein to work us evil.

MARY BEATON

Here comes one  
Hot-spurred with haste and pale with this hour's  
news :  
Now shall we know what work it had to do  
And what the next hour may.

*Enter* GEORGE DOUGLAS

GEORGE DOUGLAS

The day is lost.  
There is but one way with us ; here we stand  
As in death's hand already. You must fly,  
Madam, while time be left or room for flight,  
As if there be I know not.

FLEMING

Is the van  
Broken ?

GEORGE DOUGLAS

Look up where late it stood so fast  
That wellnigh for an hour the grappling ranks  
Were so enlinked in front, the men behind  
That fired across the rank of them before  
And hurled their pistols in their enemies' face  
Above their comrades' heads that held the van  
Saw them yet reeking on the spear-shafts lodged  
That caught them flatlong fallen athwart the staves  
Fixed opposite and level, till a shot  
Slew him that led behind the artillery up

As the first round was ended on our part,  
And straight a gunner's linstock dropped, and gave  
Fire to the powder-waggon.

MAXWELL

But the horse—  
We saw my father's with Lord Seyton's horse  
Hurl up against the left side round the hill  
And break their right wing in the rear.

GEORGE DOUGLAS

Ye saw?  
But not who brought them rescue, and bore back  
Your father's force with might and ruin ; Grange  
And Lindsay, with my brother third, who fights  
With the more bitter heart and hate to-day  
For our name's sake to purge him of my deed  
And wreak him on my friends ; and would to God,  
But for the service' sake I had to do,  
He had met me whom perchance he sought, and slain,  
Ere I had borne this news out of the fight  
To bid you fly.

QUEEN

Where will God set mine end ?  
I am wearied of this flying from death to death  
That is my life, and man's : where'er I go,  
From God and death I fly not : and even here  
It may be they must find me.

MARY BEATON

Nay, not yet ;  
Take heart again, and fly.

## QUEEN

O, this I knew,  
Even by thine eyes I knew it a great while since  
As now by mine. Our end of fear is come,  
That casts out hope as well. Let us make hence.  
Perchance our help is in Dumbarton yet  
Upon the rock where I would fain at first  
Have set my feet ; how say you, Fleming, now ?  
May we there make us fast ?

## GEORGE DOUGLAS

The ways are thronged  
With arms and noise of enemies ; everywhere  
The land is full of death and deadly cries  
From throats that gape for blood ; the regent's horse  
Hold all the highway ; and the straiter lanes  
Stand thick with peasant folk whose hands are armed  
With staves and sickles in their rage caught up  
To strike at you for fault of sword or pike  
Wherewith to charge us flying : no way is left  
But south to Galloway and Lord Herries' land,  
Where you may breathe but for a doubtful day  
In the sea's sight of refuge.

## MAXWELL

In God's name  
Take his good counsel, madam ; as you know  
The noble Douglas wise and true, believe  
So shall you find my father's men and mine  
In this great need.

## QUEEN

Come, help me then to horse ;  
If I must ride some hundred miles to breathe,  
As we must fly no less, I think, or fall  
Among our foes that follow, in my mind  
The worst it were not nor the unkindest death  
To die in saddle. I will not give again,  
So please it God, into mine enemies' hands  
My body up for bondage ; twice or thrice  
I have ridden hard by stars of March or May  
With false or true men to my left and right  
The wild night through for death or kingly life,  
And if I ride now with few friends at hand  
I have none false of them ; or if as once  
One ride with me that had my hate alive  
Who rode with me to his own grave, and now  
Holds me in chase toward mine—O, thou that wast  
My hate and husband, whom these men to-day  
Take on them to revenge, and in thy name  
Turn all men's hearts against me that were born  
Mine and all swords that served me, if thou be  
A shadow at hand, a ghost unreconciled,  
That waits to take his triumph, hear and see  
If in this hour that smites me, which is thine,  
Thou find one thought in me that bows my heart,  
One pang that turns it from the thing it was,  
One pulse that moves me to repent or fear  
For what was done or shall be ; if thou have  
But so much power upon me to be called  
Less hateful or more fearful, and thy death  
With aught of dread have clothed the thought of thee  
That thy life had not ; if thou seest me fly,  
Then must thou see too that thou shalt not see

In death or life one part of spirit or sense  
In me that calls thee master. To God's hand  
I give the rest ; but in mine own I hold  
The perfect power for good or evil days  
To keep the heart I had, and on myself  
Lose not one jot of lordship ; so may God  
Love me no less and be no slower, I think,  
To help my soul than theirs more vile than mine  
And made for chance to mar, whereon their fate  
Has power as on their bodies. If he will,  
Now should he help, or never ; for we leave  
A field more fatal to us and day more foul  
Than ever cast out hope. I am loth to go  
More than to die ; yet come what will soe'er,  
I shall no more. Thou told'st me not of this,  
[To MARY BEATON.

But yet I learnt it of thee. Come ; we have  
One dark day less of doom to see and live  
Who have seen this and die not. Stay by me ;  
I know thou wilt ; if I should bid thee go,  
It were but even as if I bade thee stay  
Who hast as far to flee from death as I. [Exeunt.

SCENE XII. *Dundrennan Abbey*

*The QUEEN and HERRIES*

QUEEN

Talk not to me of France ; this man it was  
That gave his tongue to serve my kinsmen's plea  
Who fain had seen me plight at Hamilton  
To their Arbroath my hand and kingdom ; nay,

I will not seek my fate at Catherine's hand,  
Nor on those lips that were my mother's watch  
My life hang weighed between a word and smile,  
Nor on that sleek face of the Florentine  
Read my doom writ, nor in her smooth swart cheek  
See the blood brighten with desire of mine.  
I will not live or die upon her tongue  
Whose hate were glad to give me death or life  
More hateful from her giving ; and I know  
How she made proffer to my last year's lords  
To take me from their bondage to her own  
And shut my days up cloistered ; even such love  
Should France afford me now that in men's sight  
I stand yet lower, as fallen from this year's hope  
To live discrowned for ever. Tell him this  
Who rode with you behind me from the field,  
And bid him bear his mistress word of me  
As one that thinks not to be made the mean  
For them to weave alliance with my foes,  
And with the purchase of my bartered blood  
Buy back their power in Scotland.

## HERRIES

I shall say it ;  
Yet this man's friendship, madam, might find faith  
Who by so wild a way has followed you  
To this third day that sees your flight at end,  
Where you may sit some forty days secure  
In trust and guard of mine.

## QUEEN

Ay, here I might,  
Were I well weary with my two nights' sleep



On this hard earth that was my naked bed  
Whom it casts out of kingdom ; but, my lord,  
For thirty leagues and more of ridden ground  
And two days' fare of peasants' meal and milk  
I am not yet nigher but by two days to death,  
Nor spent in spirit for weariness or fear  
Nor in my body broken, that my need  
Should hold me here in bonds, or on your faith  
Lay a new charge of danger. Here, you say,  
And Beaumont with you, I may bide awhile  
The levy of my friends whose rallying force  
May gather to me, or in their default  
Hence to Dumbarton may I pass by sea  
Or forth to France with safer sails, and prove  
What faith is there in friendship. Now my mind  
Is nowise here to tarry ; your true love  
Shall not for guerdon of its trust and care  
Be tried again with peril, that as well  
May be put by for your faith's sake and mine  
So mutually made much of ; nor shall they,  
Whose wounds run red yet from their regent's hand  
That on this border laid so sore a scourge  
As late their blood bore witness, for my sake  
Or give their blood again or lose their faith  
That should for me be proven, and being found true  
Bring them to death should we twice fail, or false  
Turn their safe life to shame. This shall not be ;  
But I, content to make no trial of these,  
Will hold them true and leave them unessay'd  
To live in honour. Friends I yet should have  
Whose peace and life lie not in those men's hands  
That would make prey of mine ; their faith is firm  
And their hearts great as mine own hope in them  
Who look toward me from England ; all the north

No less desires me than I need their love,  
To lift our creed and cause up that lies low,  
But wounded not to death. I have their names  
Who first I think will meet me face to face  
And lay their loyal hands in mine and pledge  
Their noble heads for surety ; lord and knight  
Whose fathers yielded up their lives for faith  
Shall fail not now to seek me cast out hence  
And gird me fast with all their following round  
And stalwart musters of their spearmen raised  
To do me service of stout heart and steel  
For these lords' sake that call me lady ; names  
That bear the whole might of this northern land  
Upon their blazon, and the grace and strength  
Of their old honour with them to that side  
That they shall serve on ; first the two great earls,  
Then Dacre, Norton, Swinburne, Markinfield,  
With all their houses, all the border's flower  
Of ancient faith and fame ; had I but these  
To rise up when I call and do me right  
I were not poorly friended, with no more  
Than this for trust to lean on ; but I think  
To find not such friends only as their name  
And cause should make in danger fast to mine,  
To link our names in all men's eyes that read  
Of faith in man for ever ; even the queen  
My sister's self shall fight upon my side,  
Being either found my friend for whom she swore  
If I were slain to fill this land with fires,  
Or casting off my cause and me stand up  
As much their enemy that partake my faith  
As mine who lack not friends in all her land  
That in this cause cast off will strike at her  
For God's sake on my party. But indeed

I look to find not such a foe of her  
As should have heart or wit to fight with me  
Though she had will who has not ; for her mind  
Still moving like a blown and barren sea  
Has yet not ever set so far toward storm  
Or so much shifted from its natural tide  
As to seem safe or prosperous for their sails  
Who traffic for my ruin ; and I fear  
No wind of change that may breathe sharp on me  
When once I stand in mine own name to speak  
Before her face and England's. If she will,  
By her shall I come back to reign her friend ;  
If not by her, then by their loves and hands  
Who shall put off her sovereignty for mine.  
There is not and there needs no better way  
Than here lies fair before my feet, which yet  
Are not so tired but they may tread it through  
To the good end. My heart is higher again  
Than ere that field it was, I know not why,  
Which sent me hither. You shall write for me  
Word to the warden of Carlisle, and say  
Your queen seeks covert for her crownless head  
With him the first in England ; and thereon  
Ere he send answer or to-morrow set  
Will I pass over.

## HERRIES

I would fain believe  
His queen were true of heart, and all your friends  
As strong to serve as faithful ; yet may she  
Have better will than she has power to make,  
As it would be, your servant ; and the land  
Is many-minded, rent with doubt in twain,

And full of fears and factions ; you may pass  
Even in this hope that now builds up your heart  
To find less help at no less need than here  
On darker ways and deadlier : yet your will  
Shall if it hold be done.

QUEEN

Despatch, and write ;  
To stand before the gate of days to be  
And beat their doors for entrance is more pain  
Than to pass in and look on life or death.  
Here will I sleep within your ward to-night,  
And then no more in Scotland. Nay, make haste ;  
I would those hours were past that hold me here.

SCENE XIII. *The Shore of Solway Firth*

*The* QUEEN, MARY BEATON, HERRIES, GEORGE  
DOUGLAS, *Page and Attendants*

QUEEN

Is not the tide yet full ?

HERRIES

Come half an hour,  
And it will turn ; but ere that ebb begin,  
Let me once more desire your pardon, though  
I plead against your pleasure. Here you stand  
Not yet dethroned from royal hope, not yet  
Discrowned of your great name, whose natural power

Faith here forgets not, nor man's loyal love  
Leaves off to honour ; but gone hence, your name  
Is but a stranger's, subject to men's laws,  
Alien and liable to control and chance  
That are the lords of exile, and command  
The days and nights of fugitives ; your hope  
Dies of strange breath or lives between strange lips,  
And nor your will nor only God's beside  
Is master of your peace of life, but theirs  
Who being the lords of land that harbours you  
Give your life leave to endure their empire : what  
Can man do to you that a rebel may,  
Which fear might deem as bad as banishment ?  
Not death, not bonds are bitterer than his day  
On whom the sun looks forth of a strange sky,  
Whose thirst drinks water from strange hands, whose  
    lips  
Eat stranger's bread for hunger ; who lies down  
In a strange dark and sleeps not, and the light  
Makes his eyes weep for their own morning, seen  
On hills that helped to make him man, and fields  
Whose flowers grew round his heart's root ; day like  
    night  
Denies him, and the stars and airs of heaven  
Are as their eyes and tongues who know him not.  
Go not to banishment ; the world is great,  
But each has but his own land in the world.  
There is one bosom that gives each man milk,  
One country like one mother : none sleeps well  
Who lies between strange breasts ; no lips drink  
    life  
That seek it from strange fosters. Go not hence ;  
You shall find no man's faith or love on earth  
Like theirs that here cleave to you.

## QUEEN

I have found  
And think to find no hate of men on earth  
Like theirs that here beats on me. Hath this earth  
Which sent me forth a five-years' child, and queen  
Not even of mine own sorrows, to come back  
A widowed girl out of the fair warm sun  
Into the grave's mouth of a dolorous land  
And life like death's own shadow, that began  
With three days' darkness—hath this earth of yours  
That made mine enemies, at whose iron breast  
They drank the milk of treason—this hard nurse,  
Whose rocks and storms have reared no violent  
thing

So monstrous as men's angers, whose wild minds  
Were fed from hers and fashioned—this that bears  
None but such sons as being my friends are weak,  
And strong, being most my foes—hath it such grace  
As I should cling to, or such virtue found  
In some part of its evil as my heart  
Should fear, being free, to part from? Have I lived,  
Since I came here in shadow and storm, three days  
Out of the storm and shadow? Have I seen  
Such rest, such hope, such respite from despair,  
As thralls and prisoners in strong darkness may  
Before the light look on them? Hath there come  
One chance on me of comfort, one poor change,  
One possible content that was not born  
Of hope to break forth of these bonds, or made  
Of trust in foreign fortune? Here, I knew,  
Could never faith nor love nor comfort breed  
While I sat fast in prison; ye, my friends,  
The few men and the true men that were mine,

What were ye but what I was, and what help  
Hath each love had of other, yours of mine,  
Mine of your faith, but change of fight and flight,  
Fear and vain hope and ruin ? Let me go,  
Who have been but grief and danger to my friends ;  
It may be I shall come with power again  
To give back all their losses, and build up  
What for my sake was broken.

## HERRIES

Did I know it,  
Yet were I loth to bid you part, and find  
What there you go to seek ; but knowing it not,  
My heart sinks in me and my spirit is sick  
To think how this fair foot once parted hence  
May rest thus light on Scottish ground no more.

## QUEEN

It shall tread heavier when it steps again  
On earth which now rejects it ; I shall live  
To bruise their heads who wounded me at heel,  
When I shall set it on their necks. Come, friends,  
I think the fisher's boat hath hoised up sail  
That is to bear none but one friend and me :  
Here must my true men and their queen take leave,  
And each keep thought of other. My fair page,  
Before the man's change darken on your chin  
I may come back to ride with you at rein  
To a more fortunate field : howe'er that be,  
Ride you right on with better hap, and live  
As true to one of merrier days than mine  
As on that night to Mary once your queen.

Douglas, I have not won a word of you ;  
What would you do to have me tarry ?

GEORGE DOUGLAS

Die.

QUEEN

I lack not love it seems then at my last.  
That word was bitter ; yet I blame it not,  
Who would not have sweet words upon my lips  
Nor in mine ears at parting. I should go  
And stand not here as on a stage to play  
My last part out in Scotland ; I have been  
Too long a queen too little. By my life,  
I know not what should hold me here or turn  
My foot back from the boat-side, save the thought  
How at Lochleven I last set foot aboard,  
And with what hope, and to what end ; and now  
I pass not out of prison to my friends,  
But out of all friends' help to banishment.  
Farewell, Lord Herries.

HERRIES

God go with my queen,  
And bring her back with better friends than I.

QUEEN

Methinks the sand yet cleaving to my foot  
Should not with no more words be shaken off,  
Nor this my country from my parting eyes  
Pass unsaluted ; for who knows what year  
May see us greet hereafter ? Yet take heed,



Ye that have ears, and hear me ; and take note,  
Ye that have eyes, and see with what last looks  
Mine own take leave of Scotland ; seven years since  
Did I take leave of my fair land of France,  
My joyous mother, mother of my joy,  
Weeping ; and now with many a woe between  
And space of seven years' darkness, I depart  
From this distempered and unnatural earth  
That casts me out unmothered, and go forth  
On this grey sterile bitter gleaming sea  
With neither tears nor laughter, but a heart  
That from the softest temper of its blood  
Is turned to fire and iron. If I live,  
If God pluck not all hope out of my hand,  
If aught of all mine prosper, I that go  
Shall come back to men's ruin, as a flame  
The wind bears down, that grows against the wind,  
And grasps it with great hands, and wins its way,  
And wins its will, and triumphs ; so shall I  
Let loose the fire of all my heart to feed  
On these that would have quenched it. I will make  
From sea to sea one furnace of the land  
Whereon the wind of war shall beat its wings  
Till they wax faint with hopeless hope of rest,  
And with one rain of men's rebellious blood  
Extinguish the red embers. I will leave  
No living soul of their blaspheming faith  
Who war with monarchs ; God shall see me reign  
As he shall reign beside me, and his foes  
Lie at my foot with mine ; kingdoms and kings  
Shall from my heart take spirit, and at my soul  
Their souls be kindled to devour for prey  
The people that would make its prey of them  
And leave God's altar stripped of sacrament

As all kings' heads of sovereignty, and make  
Bare as their thrones his temples ; I will set  
Those old things of his holiness on high  
That are brought low, and break beneath my feet  
These new things of men's fashion ; I will sit  
And see tears flow from eyes that saw me weep  
And dust and ashes and the shadow of death  
Cast from the block beneath the axe that falls  
On heads that saw me humbled ; I will do it,  
Or bow mine own down to no royal end  
And give my blood for theirs if God's will be,  
But come back never as I now go forth  
With but the hate of men to track my way  
And not the face of any friend alive.

MARY BEATON

But I will never leave you till you die.

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